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YALE STUDIES IN ENGLISH

ALBERT S. COOK, EDITOR

LXII

ANN RADCLIFFE

IN

RELATION TO HER TIME

BY

CLARA FRANCES McINTYRE

Associate Professor in the University of Wyoming



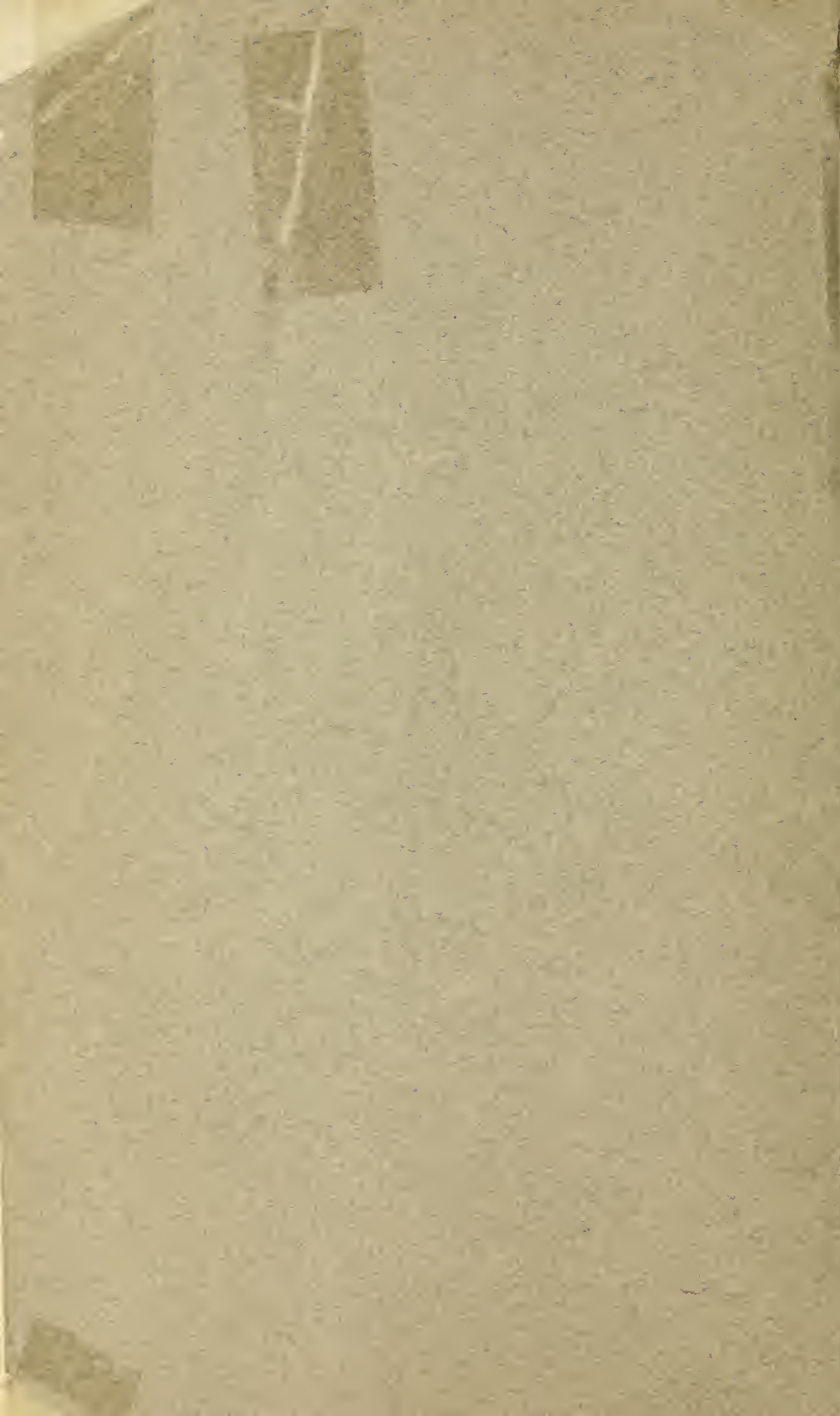
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A Dissertation presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School
of Yale University in Candidacy for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy



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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

Ann Radcliffe is among the authors who are spoken of with a certain degree of familiarity, but of whom little is really known. When her name is mentioned, people say, glibly, 'Ann Radcliffe? Oh, yes. *The Mysteries of Udolpho!*' But when questioned further, many of them are obliged to admit that even of her most famous books they know only a few pages quoted by other writers. Her importance as a literary influence we find accepted without dispute in most discussions of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century literature, especially those which have to do with the novel. But Ann Radcliffe in herself, as a literary figure of real significance and power, has received scant justice. There has been little attempt to establish definitely her place among her contemporaries; there has hardly been a thorough and consistent working-out of her influence upon later writers, although in that direction more has been done.

The one full and carefully critical treatment of Mrs. Radcliffe is still to be found in Sir Walter Scott's essay, which first appeared shortly after her death, as one of the prefaces in Ballantyne's *Novelists' Library*, and was afterward published in the collection called *Lives of the Novelists*. Among more modern works which give some considerable attention to Mrs. Radcliffe may be mentioned Professor Beers' *English Romanticism in the Eighteenth Century*; a doctoral thesis entitled *The Gothic Romance: its Origin and Development*, by Elizabeth Church, written at Radcliffe College in 1913, and as yet unpublished; a thesis by Joseph Brey, *Die Naturschilderungen in den Romanen und Gedichten der Mrs. Ann Radcliffe, nebst einem Rückblick auf die Entwicklung der Naturschilderung im Englischen*

Romane des 18. Jahrhunderts;¹ *The Gothic Romance*, by Hans Möbius;² and a study of *Englische Romankunst*, by Wilhelm Dibelius.³

Most of these works consider mainly Mrs. Radcliffe's influence upon others. It has seemed that there was perhaps room for a more thorough investigation than has hitherto been made of her actual place among her contemporaries; that it might be worth while to see what her readers and fellow-writers thought about her, and to decide, as far as possible, what part of her work was original, and what was derived from others.

The present study has several definite aims. In the first place, it attempts to put into clear and accessible form what can be discovered concerning Mrs. Radcliffe's life. It takes up her work from several points of view, considering the sources from which she drew material; the popularity of her books, as shown by contemporary estimates, especially in leading magazines of her day, and by the numerous translations and dramatizations which were made; and a somewhat neglected aspect of her contribution to the novel—her modification of its structure.

The most interesting thing about the study has been its revelation of the really important place which this almost forgotten author held in the literary judgment of her generation. She was praised not only by the general crowd of fiction-readers, but by men who made a profession of criticizing literature, and who had a sense of literary values. An examination of the magazines of the late eighteenth century shows us that in her own day she occupied constantly and triumphantly the chief place in public favor. She was referred to as the Great Enchantress, and it was perhaps because Scott was recognized as in a sense her

¹ Munich, 1908.

² Leipzig, 1902.

³ *Palastra*, Vol. 92, Berlin, 1910.

successor that his more powerful spells won for him the title of the Wizard of the North. Even he did not at once take precedence of Mrs. Radcliffe, and, great though the interest was which he aroused, it does not seem to have been universally recognized that a distinctly superior power had appeared. Henry Crabb Robinson, writing of *Waverley* in 1815,¹ balances the merits of the two writers as if he accepted them as equals:

The author's sense of the romantic and picturesque is not so delicate, or his execution so powerful, as Mrs. Radcliffe's, but his paintings of men and manners are more valuable. The incidents are not so dexterously contrived, and the author has not produced a very interesting personage in his hero, Waverley, who, as his name was probably intended to indicate, is ever hesitating between two kings and two mistresses.

Scott, in his own judgment of Mrs. Radcliffe, is both generous and discriminating:

It may be true, that Mrs. Radcliffe rather walks in fairy-land than in the region of realities, and that she has neither displayed the command of the human passions, nor the insight into the human heart, nor the observation of life and manners, which recommend other authors in the same line. But she has taken the lead in a line of composition, appealing to those powerful and general sources of interest, a latent sense of supernatural awe, and curiosity concerning whatever is hidden and mysterious; and if she has been ever nearly approached in this walk, which we should hesitate to affirm, it is at least certain that she has never been excelled or even equalled.²

One of whom Scott could speak in such terms, one who was largely responsible for a literary type which has not entirely ceased its influence even down to our own time, certainly has some claim to consideration. We have hardly the right to dismiss her with a patronizing smile, and a joking reference to subterranean passages, long-suffering maidens, vanishing lights, and creaking doors.

¹ *Diary* 1. 304.

² *Lives of the Novelists*, p. 244.

CHAPTER I

FACTS OF MRS. RADCLIFFE'S LIFE

The title of this chapter is chosen advisedly. We know a few plain, bald facts about Ann Radcliffe's experience in the world, and that is all we know. The whole range of her personality and relationships we can get only by inference or imagination. She did not, as some authors have done, leave letters and diaries which reveal her friendships, her tastes, and her ideals. The journals which she did keep record her impressions of external things, rather than her inner life.

It is extraordinary that any one who occupied so conspicuous a place in the literary world could have kept her personal affairs so completely away from public observation. A writer in the *Edinburgh Review* (38. 360, note) for May, 1823, makes the following comment on Mrs. Radcliffe:

The fair authoress kept herself almost as much *incognito* [*sic*] as the Author of *Waverley*; nothing was known of her but her name on the title page. She never appeared in public, nor mingled in private society, but kept herself apart, like the sweet bird that sings its solitary notes, shrowded and unseen.

In truth, her anonymity, though in one sense less complete than Scott's, was more persistent. Her name, indeed, appeared upon the title-page, but to most of her readers the name revealed nothing. Her private life and her authorship were to her, evidently, two entirely separate things, and in those days there were no interviewers sufficiently daring to make the one an excuse for intruding upon the other.

The few facts which give us our only definite hold on Ann Radcliffe as a person are found in the *Annual Biog-*

raphy and Obituary for 1824.¹ It is this account which is made use of by Scott in the *Lives of the Novelists*, by Mrs. Kavanagh in the *English Women of Letters*, and by Talfourd in the memoir prefixed to *Gaston de Blondville*. Part of the information furnished here, it seems likely, is quoted directly from Mr. Radcliffe himself, for the author of the memoir says he went to the person best qualified to speak of Mrs. Radcliffe, and that would naturally have been her husband. Although this biographical sketch has been used by the writers just mentioned, a portion of it may be repeated here, as it is the most authoritative statement that we have of Ann Radcliffe's ancestry:

She was born in London, in the year 1764; the daughter of William and Ann Ward, who, though in trade, were nearly the only persons of their two families not living in handsome, or at least easy independence. Her paternal grandmother was a Cheselden, the sister of the celebrated surgeon of whose kind regard her father had a grateful recollection, and some of whose presents, in books, I have seen. The late Lieutenant Colonel Cheselden, of Somerby in Leicestershire, was, I think, another nephew of the surgeon. Her father's aunt, the late Mrs. Barwell, first of Leicester, and then of Duffield in Derbyshire, was one of the sponsors at her baptism. Her maternal grandmother was Ann Oates, the sister of Dr. Samuel Jebb of Stratford, who was father of Sir Richard: on that side she was also related to Dr. Halifax, Bishop of Gloucester, and to Dr. Halifax, Physician to the King. Perhaps it may gratify curiosity to state further, that she was descended from a near relative of the DeWitts of Holland. In some family papers which I have seen, it is stated that a DeWitt, of the family of John and Cornelius, came to England, under the patronage of government, upon some design of draining the fens in Lincolnshire, bringing with him a daughter, Amelia, then an infant. The prosecution of the plan is supposed to have been interrupted by the rebellion, in the time of Charles the First; but DeWitt appears to have passed the remainder of his life in a mansion near Hull, and to have left many children, of whom Amelia was the mother of one of Mrs. Radcliffe's ancestors.²

¹ 8. 89.

² *Annual Biography and Obituary* 8. 98.

This passage perhaps shows an innocent desire on Mr. Radcliffe's part to emphasize the importance of his wife's family, but it does certainly tell us that she came of honorable stock. A little further on, we have the account of some of the advantages which she enjoyed in her childhood.

Besides that a great part of her youth had been passed in the residences of her superior relatives, she had the advantage of being much loved, when a child, by the late Mr. Bentley; to whom, on the establishment of the fabric known by the name of Wedgwood and Bentley's, was appropriated the superintendence of all that related to form and design. Mr. Wedgwood was the intelligent man of commerce, and the able chemist; Mr. Bentley the man of more general literature, and of taste in the arts. One of her mother's sisters was married to Mr. Bentley; and, during the life of her aunt, who was accomplished 'according to the moderation'—may I say, the *wise* moderation?—of that day, the little niece was a favorite guest at Chelsea, and afterwards at Turnham Green, where Mr. and Mrs. Bentley resided. At their house she saw several persons of distinction for literature; and others who, without having been so distinguished, were beneficial objects of attention for their minds and their manners. Of the former class the late Mrs. Montague, and once, I think, Mrs. Piozzi; of the latter, Mrs. Ord. The gentleman called Athenian Stuart was also a visitor there.

This passage would seem to involve us in a slight difficulty. Thomas Bentley married in 1754 Miss Hannah Oates, of Sheffield.¹ She died two years after this marriage, and he afterward married Mary Stamford, of Derby. It would have been impossible for Ann Ward to make visits 'during the life of her aunt,' as the latter died eight years before Ann was born. According to Eliza Meteyard, however, an elder sister of Hannah Oates kept house for her brother-in-law from the death of his first wife to his second marriage in 1772, and apparently, even after the second marriage, spent considerable time in his household. Miss

¹ Meteyard, *Life of Joseph Wedgwood* 1. 305; 2. 258.

Meteyard adds, 'A niece seems also to have occasionally resided with them,'¹ and again she remarks, 'Nor was childhood absent from that pleasant home, with its fine gardens, its enviring fields, and the 'great silent highway' flowing near. A little niece of either Miss Oates or Mr. Bentley passed much of her time at Chelsea.'²

I have called attention to this rather small point because, if Ann Ward was the 'little niece' mentioned here, the fact gives valuable testimony as to her early opportunities. Mr. Bentley was, from all accounts, not only a man of business, but possessed of wide culture. Miss Meteyard speaks of his popularity and his courtliness of manner, and mentions many people of prominence in literary and scientific work whom he counted among his friends. He himself contributed articles to the *Gentleman's Magazine* and the *Monthly Review*, and Wedgwood, in one of his letters, reproaches him for not publishing a manuscript on female education.³ He was evidently able to introduce his niece to a circle interested in literature and art, a society which must have been most stimulating to a young girl of quick intelligence; and he probably took an active interest in her development. Her biographer is certainly right in calling her intimacy with the Bentley family an advantage.

Mr. Bentley died in 1780, when Ann was sixteen. For the last three years of his life, his residence was at Turnham Green. It was in 1774 that he left his Chelsea home; if his niece visited him there, it must have been when she was only a child.

So far as her formal education is concerned, we are able to learn little. The general impression given by her biographers is that it was the ordinary education of the young girl of that day, and that, according to modern ideas, it

¹ *Ibid.* 1. 305.

² *Ibid.* 2. 172.

³ Julia Wedgwood, *Personal Life of Josiah Wedgwood*, p. 48.

would seem, if not superficial, decidedly incomplete. Mrs. Kavanagh speaks of her education as 'plain,' and adds¹:

Had Ann Radcliffe been John Radcliffe, and received the vigorous and polished education which marks the man and the gentleman, we might have a few novels less, but we would assuredly have some fine pages more in that language where, spite their merit, her works will leave no individual trace.

From Mrs. Radcliffe's own work we might, perhaps, be inclined to give her credit for rather more knowledge than this comment implies. Her references to authors, both in her journals and in her novels, show not only thorough familiarity but genuine appreciation, and the quotations which she uses as headings to her chapters suggest a considerable range of reading. Mrs. Elwood, in her *Memoirs of Literary Ladies*, gives, on the authority of an unnamed contemporary who spent an evening with Mrs. Radcliffe, the statement that she was a great admirer of Schiller's *Robbers*, and that her favorite tragedy was *Macbeth*. Her favorite painters were Salvator, Claude, and Gaspar Pous-sin. Her favorite poets after Shakespeare were Tasso, Milton, and Spenser. Whether she had a knowledge of any language other than her own seems uncertain. The writer of the sketch in the *Annual Biography and Obituary*, before quoted, speaks of her 'gratification in listening to any good verbal sounds'; and says that she 'would desire to hear passages repeated from the Latin and Greek classics; requiring, at intervals, the most literal translations that could be given, with all that was possible of their idiom, how much soever the version might be embarrassed by that aim at exactness.' This would make it appear that she had no understanding of the originals. In her *Journey Through Holland*, however, she twice makes use of a Latin quotation, with considerable aptness, and, moreover, in an incidental way which makes it seem probable that the words were familiar to her. In one case¹ the reference is to Lucretius:

¹ *English Women of Letters*, p. 255.

² *Journey* 2. 272.

We returned to our low-roofed habitation, where, as the wind swept in hollow gusts along the mountains and strove against our casements, the crackling blaze of a wood fire lighted up the cheerfulness, which, so long since as Juvenal's [sic] time, has been allowed to arise from the contrast of ease against difficulty. *Suave mari magno, turbantibus aequora ventis.*¹

In the other passage she refers to Tacitus,² mentioning 'the fine speech, beginning, *Nunquam apud vos verba feci, aut pro vobis sollicitior, aut pro me securior*; a passage so near to the *cunctisque timentem, securumque sui*, by which Lucan describes Cato, that it must be supposed to have been inspired by it.'³

Of course it is quite possible that these writings were known to Mrs. Radcliffe only in translation, and that she had her husband's aid in finding the originals, but in that case it seems almost strange that she did not make her acknowledgment of his assistance more general, since she scrupulously makes mention of the fact that he is responsible for the political observations in the book.

It must be admitted that the whole question of Mrs. Radcliffe's early education remains largely a matter of conjecture. One of her French biographers⁴ remarks, 'Elle reçut une éducation distinguée,' but he gives no details in support of his statement. The fact that in 1781 the Misses Sophia and Harriet Lee opened their school for young ladies at Bath suggests a reasonable source for her early training, and that she may have been a pupil in the school seems possible from a comment in the obituary notice of Sophia Lee in the *Annual Register* for 1824.⁵ No records of this school are extant, however; so it is impossible to know whether

¹ Lucretius 2. 1.

² *Hist.* 4. 58.

³ *Journey* 1. 124.

⁴ Arnault, *Biographie Nouvelle des Contemporains*, Vol. 17.

⁵ 66. 217: 'It is to be remarked that Mrs. Radcliffe (then Miss Ward), resident at Bath, and acquainted in Miss Lee's family, though too young to have appeared herself as a writer, was among the warmest admirers of "The Recess."'

Miss Ward's name appeared upon the roll of pupils. About all the conclusions we are justified in drawing are these: that she had read rather widely, both in older and in more modern authors; that she knew something of art and music; and that, among her own relatives and connections, she had the advantage of intelligent and refined society.

In 1787, at the age of twenty-three, Ann Ward married William Radcliffe, a graduate of Oxford, and a student of law.¹ Mr. Radcliffe did not, however, complete his legal studies; he turned, instead, to journalism, and became the proprietor and editor of the *English Chronicle*. He seems, also, to have had general literary interests, apart from his editorial duties. In the *Monthly Review* for June, 1790, appears a review of '*A Journey through Sweden*. Written in French by a Dutch Officer and translated into English by William Radcliffe, A.B. of Oriel College, Oxford;' and in the same magazine for September, 1790, is a review of *The Natural History of East Tartary*, translated by the same author. There is no further description, to show whether this is the William Radcliffe who married Ann Ward, but the exact correspondence of the name and title with those given in the marriage-notice makes it seem probable.

Marriage, with Ann Ward, seems to have meant not the ending, but the beginning, of a career. In the scanty biographical treatments of Mrs. Radcliffe which we possess,

¹ Mr. R. W. M. Wright, sub-librarian of the Victoria Art Gallery and Reference Library, Bath, furnished me with the following notices:

Entry in Parish Register of St. Michaels Church,
Bath.
Jan. 15th 1787. William Radcliffe Bachelor William Ward
 Anne Ward Spinster Witness Rose Forbes

Bath Chronicle, Thurs., Jan'y 18, 1787.

Monday, was married at St. Michaels Church the Rev William Radcliffe A. B. of Oriel College, Oxford, to Miss Ward, daughter of Mr. Ward, of Milsom Street.

one statement is made emphatic, that she was encouraged to her writing—urged to it, in fact—by her husband. We are even told that on their journeys she was always equipped with a number of notebooks in which she wrote her impressions of the scenery, and that Mr. Radcliffe amused himself by reading what she had written. To enjoy reading about scenery, when in the presence of the scenery itself, certainly implies either devotion on the part of the reader, or charm on the part of the writer. In this case both probably existed to a considerable degree.

Mrs. Radcliffe's first book, *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne*, was published two years after her marriage, a short review of it appearing in the *Critical Review* for September, 1789.¹ It was published anonymously, as were the first editions of *A Sicilian Romance*, in 1791, and *The Romance of the Forest*, in 1792. It was not until the second edition of the latter book that the author's name appeared on the title-page. *The Romance of the Forest* completely established the reputation of the author, whose second book had attracted much more favorable comment than the first. *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, in 1794, made her the most popular writer of the day. This was followed, in 1795, by *A Journey Made in the Summer of 1794, through Holland and the Western Frontier of Germany, with a Return down the Rhine: to which are added Observations during a Tour to the Lakes of Lancashire, Westmoreland and Cumberland*. *The Italian*, in 1796, completes the list of works published during Mrs. Radcliffe's lifetime.

Further discussion of her work and its reception will be given later. Here it will suffice to say that at the time *The Italian* appeared, probably no author was so generally admired and so eagerly read as this young woman, who had begun writing, we are told, to pass away the winter evenings when her husband was away at his work, and who, at first, any way, took her productions much less seriously than he.

¹ 68. 251.

With this we come to the end of Mrs. Radcliffe's productive period, and to the consideration of a puzzling question. Why, at the early age of thirty-two, at the height of her fame, did she suddenly lay down her pen, and, except for some poems, and an experiment in historical romance which she apparently had no intention of publishing, never take it up again?

No one of the answers that have been offered is wholly satisfying. Perhaps a combination of all the answers might yield greater satisfaction. One suggestion is that she was grieved over unfavorable comments on *The Italian*. It is true that some reviewers spoke of the book as falling short of *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, and even *The Romance of the Forest*; but others praised it as surpassing the earlier works, and none of the reviews was sufficiently scathing to discourage even a highly sensitive author. Another theory is that she was disgusted by the many absurd productions which tried to win popularity by imitation of her. There seems to be rather more plausibility in this. A lady of any literary conscience might well have a sense of guilt at being responsible for such a following. It may even be that, having seen the *reductio ad absurdum* of her method, she came to distrust the method itself, and lost the inclination to carry it further. A more personal reason for her cessation of activity is furnished by her biographers in the fact that she received a legacy which made her pecuniarily independent, and therefore removed any temptation to write for gain. In connection with the pecuniary side of Mrs. Radcliffe's writing, a passage in the *Annual Biography and Obituary* is interesting:

Some exaggeration has taken place with respect to the pecuniary advantages which Mrs. Radcliffe derived from her talents. For instance, it has been said, that she received 1000*l* from the Messrs. Robinsons, for the copy-right of 'The Mysteries of Udolpho.' The real amount was 500*l*; at that time so unusually large a sum for a work of imagination, that old Mr. Cadell,

than whom no man was more experienced in such matters, when he was told that 500£ had been given, offered a wager of 10£ that it was not the fact. It has also been said, that Mrs. Radcliffe received 1500£ for the copyright of 'The Italians.' [sic] The real amount did not exceed 800£.

Although we have no suggestion that, in her early married life, Mrs. Radcliffe was in particular need of money, it is probable that these extra sums were welcome. Later on, when private resources made possible more indulgences in the way of entertainment and travel, and when, perhaps, her husband had more time to enjoy these things with her, there was less temptation to put her fancies into salable form.

Aside from the list of her publications, we find the chief record of Mrs. Radcliffe's life in the journeys that she made. Even without this record, we could almost infer her love of traveling from her books. Mrs. Kavanagh remarks that her heroes and heroines are always going on journeys. In this, it is true, she was following to some extent the tradition of the novel. But in the older novels the chief aim of the hero's travels was to expose him continually to new adventures. With Mrs. Radcliffe there is a second aim—to describe the changing scenery, and to show its effect upon the traveler.

In spite of her love of travel, Mrs. Radcliffe was not, on the whole, a journeyer in far places. Her one experience of the Continent was the trip through Holland and western Germany, mentioned before. The intention of the travelers to go on into Switzerland was frustrated by a disobliging official, who refused to believe that they were English, and would not honor their passports.

How little was accurately known of Mrs. Radcliffe, even in her own time, is shown by the following statement in the *Edinburgh Review* for May, 1823¹:

¹ 38. 360, note.

The Editor of the *Englishman* for many years was a Mr. Radcliffe. He had been formerly attached to some of our embassies into Italy, where his lady accompanied him; and here she imbibed that taste for picturesque scenery, and the obscure and wild superstitions of mouldering castles, of which she has made so beautiful a use in her Romances.

Scott corrects this statement, but draws an inference of his own which seems hardly less mistaken:

In 1793, Mrs. Radcliffe had the advantage of visiting the scenery of the Rhine, and, although we are not positive of the fact, we are strongly inclined to suppose that *The Mysteries of Udolpho* were written, or at least corrected, after the date of this journey; for the mouldering castles of the robber-chivalry of Germany, situated on the wild and romantic banks of that celebrated stream, seem to have given a bolder flight to her imagination, and a more glowing character to her colouring, than are exhibited in *The Romance of the Forest*. . . . Her remarks upon these countries were given to the public in 1794, in a very well-written work, entitled *A Journey through Holland*, etc.¹

Unfortunately for Scott's theory, the very title of the book to which he refers contradicts it. It is *A Journey Made in the Summer of 1794*, and the first announcement of its publication is found in the *London Chronicle* for May 1, 1795. The first notice of *The Mysteries of Udolpho* appeared on May 10, 1794. It seems impossible, therefore, that the castles of the Rhine could have had anything to do with Mrs. Radcliffe's famous description of the Castle of Udolpho. It must remain a product of her imagination, assisted by her reading.

After this one longer expedition, Mrs. Radcliffe's travels were confined to her own country. We have mention of a tour round the coast of Kent in 1797. In 1798 she visited Portsmouth and the Isle of Wight; in 1800, the coast of Sussex; in 1801, the New Forest and the Isle of Wight. The journey in 1802 is of especial interest. In that year

¹ *Lives of the Novelists*, p. 215.

she visited Leicester and Warwick, Kenilworth, Oxford, and Woodstock; and the trip to Kenilworth was the evident inspiration of *Gaston de Blondville*, which was written shortly after, but was not published until after her death. The latest journey of any length which we find recorded was one to Portsmouth and the Isle of Wight, in the autumn of 1811. In her later years, she and her husband gave up the more distant excursions, and hired a carriage for the summer months, so that they might make trips to attractive places near London.

The seclusion of Mrs. Radcliffe's life led, naturally, to many misunderstandings and false reports. One source of confusion was that during her lifetime several books appeared under names very similar to hers. The British Museum Catalogue has Mary Ann Radcliffe of Kennington Cross, author of *The Memoirs of Mrs. M. A. Radcliffe in familiar letters to her female friend*, and *The Female Advocate, or an attempt to recover the rights of women from male usurpation*; Mary Anne Radcliffe, author of *Manfroné*; or *the One-handed Monk*; and Ann Sophia Radcliffe, author of *The Ladies Elegant Jester; or, Fun for the Female Sex*.

The first of these books probably helped to strengthen the belief in Mrs. Radcliffe's death which her long silence seemed to support. Mention of the book appears in the Monthly List of Publications of the *British Critic* for February, 1811.¹ The *Critic* for August, 1812, has the following comment on it²:

We at first sight promised ourselves and our readers also, much satisfaction from presenting Memoirs of the very ingenious and much lamented Mrs. Radcliffe, compiled by herself, but it seems that the lady here commemorated is, or rather was, a very different personage. Whether the Tale is real or fictitious is not declared, but the reader will find a narrative by no means ill written, of an unfortunate individual, whose life

¹ 37. 205.

² 40. 189.

exhibits a useful moral, and lessons of important caution to the thoughtless of her own sex. Some agreeable specimens of poetry are interspersed, and the volume is introduced by a very highly respectable list of subscribers.

It is sometimes inferred that the writers of these books were masquerading under names assumed with the deliberate intention of profiting by an established reputation. This would hardly seem to be true in the case of *The Female Advocate*; for the author, in the introduction, apologizing for her daring in undertaking such a performance, says, 'a first attempt, surrounded by all the disadvantages peculiar to the sex, seems to her, to require no small share of courage, and which, indeed, nothing but the importance of the subject should have induced her to encounter.' If she had been posing as the Ann Radcliffe of the novels, she would hardly, writing in 1799, have spoken of her effort as 'a first attempt.'

Manfroné; or the One-handed Monk is an undeniable imitation of Mrs. Radcliffe's novels. The opening is a hash of Radcliffian details: we have a large, dark apartment with flickering light, a girl who has been perusing a gloomy tale, and, feeling a presentiment of evil, is about to summon her maid to spend the night with her, when she is interrupted by a startling adventure, in the midst of which, quite in the fashion of Mrs. Radcliffe's heroines, she faints away. There are many other resemblances throughout the book. But the feeble descriptions of nature could hardly be mistaken for Mrs. Radcliffe's, and there are slips in grammar of which she would not be guilty. We find the book attributed to her, however, in some of the discussions of her work, and this mistake was undoubtedly far from helpful to her reputation. In one of the accounts of her which appeared after her death¹ we are told that 'the imitations of her style and manner by various literary adventurers, the publication of some other novels under a name slightly

¹ *Portfolio* 16. 137.

varied for the purpose of imposing on the public, and the flippant use of the term "Radcliffe school," by scribblers of all classes, tended altogether to disgust her with the world, and create a depression of spirits, which led for many years, in a considerable degree to seclude her from society.' When *Manfroné* appeared, however, in 1809, it was already more than ten years since Mrs. Radcliffe had written anything for publication; so that it cannot bear much of the responsibility for her seclusion.

The report of Mrs. Radcliffe's death was not the only one which gained public credence; there was also a story that excessive use of her imagination in representing extravagant and violent scenes had driven her insane, and that she was ending her days in an asylum. This rumor was so persistent that in the memoir prefixed to *Gaston de Blondville* was included a statement from her physician in regard to her mental condition during the last part of her life. That this statement was the outcome of some bitterness of feeling appears from a passage in the review of her posthumous works in the *Monthly Review* for July, 1826¹:

There is one part of Mrs. Radcliffe's life upon which we should have abstained from offering a single remark, if a passage in the memoir had not made it incumbent on us to say a word or two in our own vindication. In a former number of this journal² after pointing out an error as to a date in Sir Walter Scott's memoir of that lady, we stated, from authority upon which we had every reason to rely, that 'she died in a state of mental desolation not to be described.' It was no part of our object to wound the feelings of any of her surviving friends, particularly not of Mr. Radcliffe, for whom we entertain great respect. But the fact formed a part of the literary history of the country, and, if our information were correct, we saw no reason why it should be suppressed. Not content, however, with denying its truth, Mr. Radcliffe, or some person by his authority, charged us, in the public prints, with impropriety in making such

¹ N. S. 2. 280.

² Former Series 108. 269.

a statement, and that charge is repeated in a document drawn up and signed by Dr. Scudamore, and inserted in the memoir now before us. That we may not be accused of garbling it we shall here present the whole of that document to the reader.

'Mrs. Radcliffe had been for several years subject to severe catarrhal coughs, and also was occasionally afflicted with asthma.

'In March, 1822, she was ill with inflammation of the lungs, and for a considerable time remained much indisposed. With the summer season and change of air, she regained a tolerable state of health.

'In the early part of January, 1823, in consequence of exposure to cold, she was again attacked with inflammation of the lungs, and much more severely than before. Active treatment was immediately adopted, but without the desired relief; and the symptoms soon assumed a most dangerous character. At the end of three weeks, however, and contrary to all expectations, the inflammation of the lungs was overcome; and the amendment was so decided, as to present a slight prospect of recovery.

'Alas! our hopes were soon disappointed. Suddenly, in the very moment of seeming calm from the previous violence of disease, a new inflammation seized the membranes of the brain. The enfeebled frame could not resist this fresh assault: so rapid in their course were the violent symptoms, that medical treatment proved wholly unavailing.

'In the space of three days death closed the melancholy scene.

'In this manner, at the age of fifty-nine, society was deprived of a most amiable and valuable member, and literature one of its brightest ornaments.

'The foregoing statement will, I hope, afford all the explanation, which can be required, of the nature of Mrs. Radcliffe's illness. During the whole continuance of the inflammation of the lungs, the mind was perfect in its reasoning powers, and became disturbed only on the last two or three days, as a natural consequence of the inflammation affecting the membranes of the brain.

'Previously to the last illness, and at all times, Mrs. Radcliffe enjoyed a remarkably cheerful state of mind; and no one was farther removed from "mental desolation," as has been so improperly described of the latter part of her life.

'She possessed a quick sensibility, as the necessary ally of her fine genius; but this quality would serve to increase the warmth of the social feelings, and effectually prevent the insulation of

the mind, either as regards the temper or the understanding.'—Memoir, pp. 103-105.

It will be seen that this document, instead of contradicting our statement, confirms it in the most pointed manner. We did not speak generally of the latter part of Mrs. Radcliffe's life as clouded by 'mental desolation,' as Dr. Scudamore has been taught to suppose; we distinctly said that she died in that unhappy state, and for this fact we need no further evidence than his own description of the melancholy close of her existence. We have been reluctantly drawn into this explanation, and we now quit the subject.

Mrs. Radcliffe died on February 7, 1823. Her obituary-notices all agree in praise of her work, and in very meagre information about her life. The publication of her posthumous works, in 1826, seemed to cause a considerable revival of interest in her, and some of the best criticisms of her work are found in reviews of these volumes. She was buried in the cemetery belonging to St. George's, Hanover Square. This burial-ground, on the Bayswater Road, near Hyde Park, is the one which contains the grave of Lawrence Sterne.¹

A life-history which consists of only bare facts is an incomplete and unsatisfactory thing. Although, as has been said, we find little recorded of Mrs. Radcliffe except facts, and very few of those, there are suggestions here and there which may help us to construct a personality.

For her personal appearance we have to rely upon the writer of the sketch in the *Annual Biography and Obituary*:

This admirable writer, whom I remember from about the time of her twentieth year, was, in her youth, of a figure exquisitely proportioned; while she resembled her father, and his brother and sister, in being low of stature. Her complexion was beautiful, as was her whole countenance, especially her eyes, eyebrows, and mouth.

¹For information in regard to this I am indebted to Professor Wilbur L. Cross, of Yale University, who remembers seeing a stone to Mrs. Radcliffe near the grave of Sterne.

If it be true that Mr. Radcliffe was the author of the sketch, we should perhaps make some allowance for sentiment in this description. But he at least does not try to show her as endowed with all the graces, for he says she was rather shy in company: 'She had not the confidence and presence of mind without which, a person conscious of being observed, can scarcely be at ease, except in long-tryed society.' Her fondness for music we could have inferred from her books, if he had not told us of it. Music plays a prominent part in all the novels, and her heroines, through whatever vicissitudes they may pass, always cling to their musical instruments.

Two incidents which he relates seem to show an extreme sensitiveness in Mrs. Radcliffe—indeed, one might say, supersensitiveness.

Miss Anna Seward, in a letter written May 21, 1799,¹ discussing *The Plays on the Passions*, made this remark: 'Before their author was known, I observed so much of the power and defects of Mrs. Radcliffe's compositions in these dramas, as to believe them hers; and I hear she owns them.' In two or three subsequent letters, Miss Seward went on to discuss the plays, still attributing them to Mrs. Radcliffe. It was not until October 7 that she owned herself mistaken. 'My literary friends now assert that they are not Mrs. Radcliffe's.'² According to Mrs. Radcliffe's biographer, the imputation that she could claim the credit for work which did not belong to her was the cause of great grief and worry. She tried to get into touch with the Mrs. Jackson whom Miss Seward had quoted as having first informed her that Mrs. Radcliffe owned the plays, but could find out nothing concerning her.

Thus the subject was dropped; for to Miss Baillie herself Mrs. Radcliffe could address nothing but protestations, which

¹ *Letters* 5. 226.

² *Ibid.*, p. 253.

could not prove a negative, and which might be held intrusive; as there was no reason to suppose that that lady had ever credited the report. . . .

I have been tedious upon this subject, but it was a great one with the deceased; and if it be possible that her spirit, now, as I humbly hope, beatified, can know what is passing here, may this asseveration of her innocence, solemnly made on her behalf, be one of its feeblest gratifications.¹

The other matter which had troubled Mrs. Radcliffe was a note added to one of Mrs. Carter's letters, which stated that 'Mrs. Carter had no personal acquaintance with Mrs. Radcliffe.' Mrs. Radcliffe's biographer remarks in regard to this:

This is strictly true; but as the remark may be misunderstood to imply that Mrs. Carter had rejected, or avoided, or would have rejected, or avoided, that acquaintance, it cannot be improper to show that she had in some measure sought it. The following short correspondence is sufficient upon the subject:—

'If Mrs. Radcliffe is not engaged, Mrs. Carter will have the pleasure of calling upon her about twelve o'clock to-morrow morning.'

'Mrs. Radcliffe is extremely sorry that an engagement to go into the country to-morrow, for some time, on account of Mr. R.'s state of health, which is very critical, will deprive her of the honour intended her by Mrs. Carter; for which she requests Mrs. C. to believe that she has a full and proper respect.'

There is no date to either of these notes; but that of Mrs. Carter enclosed the following letter:

Bath, April 18th, 1799.

Dear Madam,

I venture to give you this trouble, at the request of Mrs. Carter, whose admirable talents, and far more admirable virtues, are too well known to need any introduction from me. She very much wishes to have the pleasure of knowing you; and will deliver this letter, if she has the good fortune of finding you at home. As I am persuaded the acquaintance must afford mutual satisfaction, I could not refuse the request with which

¹ *Annual Biography and Obituary* 8. 103.

Mrs. Carter honoured me; though it is made on the supposition of my having some degree of interest with you, to which I have no claim, except from the very sincere admiration I have ever felt for your talents, and the regard and esteem with which I am, dear Madam,

Your obliged and affectionate humble servant,

H. M. Bowdler.

P.S. If Mrs. Carter does not deliver this letter herself, she will, I believe, take an early opportunity of waiting on you, with a very amiable friend of mine, Miss Shipley, who has promised to carry her in her carriage.

It certainly shows some excess of sensitiveness to read into the statement that Mrs. Carter did not know Mrs. Radcliffe the idea that Mrs. Carter did not wish to know Mrs. Radcliffe. These two instances rather incline us to believe that our author possessed something of what is commonly and indefinitely known as 'the artistic temperament.' They also incline us to wonder whether this extreme sensitiveness may not account for her withdrawal from the world. This withdrawal has been differently interpreted. Jeaffreson says of her¹:

Leading a life of domestic seclusion, and especially avoiding those circles where rank loftily patronizes literary celebrity, and mock-genius fawns slavishly on fashion, circles into which a paltry vanity too often allures the best authors, Mrs. Radcliffe was utterly unknown to the thousands of English who, in London and in the country, were burning to learn something about her.

The writer of a review in the *Literary Gazette*² takes a less kindly view:

She was ashamed, (yes, ashamed) of her own talents; and was ready to sink in the earth at the bare suspicion of any one taking her for an author; her chief ambition being to be thought a lady!

¹ *Novels and Novelists*, p. 3.

² June 3, 1826.

It seems probable that Mrs. Radcliffe's feeling was not one of silly vanity, but rather of honest pride. She was not willing to climb into society by means of her literary achievements, if she was not considered worthy in other respects. We must remember that it was not long since the days when every literary man must have his noble patron, when it was considered perfectly allowable for a Chesterfield to snub a Johnson. Eliza Meteyard, speaking of the Wedgwoods, says¹:

Mr. Josiah Wedgwood was pricked as sheriff for Dorsetshire in 1803, and his year of office was a comparatively brilliant one in county annals. But, generally speaking, the family led a quiet and retired life. Indeed, on the evidence of those still living, it was never very cordially accepted by the proud old local gentry, full of obsolete notions concerning birth and pedigree. Nature's noble rank, the only rank; the possession of a name which needed only time and knowledge to become historic; the possession of great wealth, and its intelligent and charitable use—were nothing with a generation whose notions of pedigree began with the Conquest, and thence must have due record in parchment rolls and title-deeds. To be in trade, or to possess wealth derived from trade, was then a sufficient blot on any man's escutcheon to weigh heavily against the worthiest qualities; particularly in counties as far removed from metropolitan influence as those of southern England.

Mrs. Radcliffe may have had experience with people of this sort, who looked down upon her condescendingly because her relatives were 'in trade,' and made up their minds to overlook this disgrace when she became a famous author. If so, we can hardly wonder at her independent attitude, although it seems a trifle unfortunate that she cut herself off from intercourse with other people of literary interests, as well as from society at large.

Perhaps we get most suggestion as to Mrs. Radcliffe's personality in the selections from her journals included in Talfourd's memoir. We can certainly learn something of

¹ *A Group of Englishmen*, p. 187.

her literary tastes; we hardly need to have been told that Shakespeare was her favorite author, for she is constantly making references to him. For instance, in the trip to Hastings, July 23, 1800¹:

Near eleven, before we reached Hastings; no moon; star-light; milky-way very lucid; seemed to rise out of the sea. Solemn and pleasing night-scene. Glow-worms, in great numbers, shone silently and faintly on the dewy banks, like something supernatural. Judgment of Shakespeare in selecting this image to assist the terrific impression in his ghost scene.

Again, in the account of her visit to Warwick Castle, in 1802²:

Near the summit an embattled overhanging gallery, where formerly, no doubt, sentinels used to pace during the night, looked down upon the walls of the Castle, the rivers and the country far and wide, received the watch-word from the sentinel, perched in the little watch-tower, higher still and seeing farther in the moonlight, and repeated it to the soldiers on guard on the walls and gates below. Before those great gates and underneath these towers, Shakespeare's ghost might have stalked; they are in the very character and spirit of such an apparition, grand and wild and strange; there should, however, have been more extent.

An entry made during the trip to Portsmouth and the Isle of Wight, in the autumn of 1811, shows her feeling for music, as well as her constant reference to Shakespeare.³

How sweet is the cadence of the distant surge! It seemed, as we sat in our inn, as if a faint peal of far-off bells mingled with the sounds on shore, sometimes heard, sometimes lost: the first note of the beginning, and last of the falling peal, seeming always the most distinct. This resounding of the distant surge on a rocky shore might have given Shakespeare his idea when he makes Ferdinand, in the *Tempest*, hear, amidst the storm, bells ringing his father's dirge; a music which Ariel also commemorates, together with the sea-wave:—

¹ *Memoir*, p. 42. (*Gaston de Blondville*, etc., Vol. 1.)

² *Memoir*, p. 60.

³ *Memoir*, p. 79.

'Sea-nymphs hourly ring his knell,
Ding, dong, bell!'

In other passages she quotes from Goldsmith and from Collins.

A reference to Claude Lorraine is interesting, since her gentler landscapes are often compared to his. The passage is found in the account of her visit to Belvedere House, in June, 1805¹:

In a shaded corner, near the chimney, a most exquisite Claude, an evening view, perhaps over the Campagna of Rome. The sight of this picture imparted much of the luxurious repose and satisfaction, which we derive from contemplating the finest scenes of Nature. Here was the poet, as well as the painter, touching the imagination, and making you see more than the picture contained. You saw the real light of the sun, you breathed the air of the country, you felt all the circumstances of a luxurious climate on the most serene and beautiful landscape; and, the mind being thus softened, you almost fancied you heard Italian music on the air—the music of Paisiello; and such, doubtless, were the scenes that inspired him.

The love of nature which her novels reveal is shown just as strikingly, and even more effectively, in these informal journals. We find one comment which is interesting in view of some of her descriptions:

I prefer rich beauty to wild beauty, unless accompanied by such shapes of grandeur as verge upon the sublime.²

In an entry written during the trip to Beachy Head, July 23, 1800, we have not only some remarkably vivid description, but a little more suggestion than usual of the personal side of Mrs. Radcliffe³:

Walked to the shore and along it, with a hope of having some sight of the sea-front of Beachy Head from beneath it,

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

² *Ibid.*, p. 54.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

though four or five miles off. . . . Within half a mile of the great front, unable to proceed farther; sat down on a block, wearied out, desiring William to go on; he was soon hid by a turn of the cliffs. Almost frightened at the solitude and vastness of the scene, though *Chance*¹ was with me. Tide almost out; only sea in front; white cliffs rising over me, but not impending; strand all around a chaos of rocks and fallen cliffs, far out into the waves; sea-fowl wheeling and screaming; all disappeared behind the point, beyond which, is the great cliff; but we had doubled point after point, in the hope that this would be the next; and had been much deceived in the distances by these great objects; after one remote point gained, another and another succeeded, and still the great cliff was unattained; the white precipices beautifully varied with plants, green, blue, yellow and poppy. Wheat-ears flew up often from the beach; *Chance* pursued them. At length William returned, having been nearly, but not quite, in front of the great promontory. Slowly and laboriously we made our way back along the beach, greatly fatigued, the day exceedingly hot, the horizon sulphurous, with lowering clouds; thunder rolled faintly at a distance.

Perhaps the mention of the favorite dog, with the evidently close companionship of husband and wife, recalls to those who are familiar with the letters of Elizabeth Barrett and Robert Browning that other 'literary marriage.' But Mr. Radcliffe, although apparently well known and respected in his own time, has lived in literary history only as the husband of his wife. That even in his lifetime his wife's fame had become the chief distinction of the family is shown by the notice of his mother's death in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for February, 1809²:

At the rectory-house at Broughton, co. Lincoln, aged 71, Mrs. Deborah Radcliffe, mother of the husband of the celebrated Authoress of several highly-esteemed Novels and other works.

Mrs. Radcliffe's attitude toward her literary contemporaries is mentioned both in the memoir prefixed to *Gaston*

¹ Her favorite dog.

² 79. 188.

de Blondville, and in the article in the *Annual Biography and Obituary*. In the former we have the statement¹:

Much of her leisure was spent in reading the literary productions of the day, especially poetry and novels. Of the latter works she always spoke with entire freedom from jealousy, and devoured the earlier Scotch novels with all the avidity of youth, although she felt deeply a slighting expression in 'Waverley,' towards herself, which the author might have spared. Sir Walter Scott has, however, made ample amends to her reputation by his elaborate criticism prefixed to Ballantine's edition of her romances.

The 'slighting expression' referred to occurs in Scott's humorous explanation of his title,² and was probably not meant to carry any real sting.

More serious criticisms by contemporary authors are suggested by her other biographer, when he says:

Of censure she had as small a share as could be, considering her distinction; and that, too, chiefly from the writers of other novels or romances, whose candour on the subject may be suspected; since it is certain that no writer of fictitious narrative is required, otherwise than by his or her own motives, to deliver an opinion upon contemporaries. She never spoke of their writings, except when she could have the delight, which she often had, of expressing admiration; or when, indeed, she had

¹ *Memoir*, p. 98.

² *Waverley*, Introductory: 'Had I, for example, announced in my frontispiece, "Waverley, a Tale of other Days," must not every novel-reader have anticipated a castle scarce less than that of Udolpho, of which the eastern wing had long been uninhabited, and the keys either lost, or consigned to the care of some aged butler or house-keeper, whose trembling steps, about the middle of the second volume, were doomed to guide the hero, or heroine, to the ruinous precincts? Would not the owl have shrieked and the cricket cried in my very title-page? and could it have been possible for me, with a moderate attention to decorum, to introduce any scene more lively than might be produced by the jocularly of a clownish but faithful valet, or the garrulous narrative of the heroine's *fille-de-chambre*, when rehearsing the stories of blood and horror which she had heard in the servants' hall?'

the other entertainment, of observing that those who betrayed a wish to expel her violently from the field of literature, or at least to close it roughly against her as she retired, seldom failed to imitate her in one part of their works, after having endeavored to proscribe her by another.¹

Mrs. Radcliffe's housewifely talents are mentioned with considerable emphasis. We are told that she 'was minutely attentive to her household affairs. . . . Although by no means disposed to parsimony, she kept an exact account of daily disbursements, until a very short time before her death.' Probably this attention to practical details was hardly expected of literary ladies. Least of all would it be looked for in one whose imagination led her to the working out of extravagant adventures, rather than to the reproduction of everyday life. But even in her novels we find scenes of domestic happiness, which, although they are described in rather stilted language, have both sincerity and charm. An example of this is the account of La Luc's family, in *The Romance of the Forest*; another is the opening of *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, which gives an almost idyllic picture of Emily's early life with her father and mother. Another suggestion of Mrs. Radcliffe's devotion to her home may perhaps be gathered from one of her poems. These, for the most part, strike one as conventional exercises in verse, and rather poor ones at that; they show very little of the writer's actual feeling. But *December's Eve at Home* seems to me to bear at least a faint stamp of autobiography. It may serve to modify the traditional picture of Mrs. Radcliffe, sitting lonely on winter evenings writing her direful tales, while the wind howls outside as drearily as it does around her imaginary castle. Here we have her winter evening with the pleasant accompaniments of light, music, and friendly companionship, including the favorite dog which we have met before:

¹ *Annual Biog. and Obit.*, p. 104.

Welcome December's cheerful night,
When the taper-lights appear ;
When the piled hearth blazes bright,
And those we love are circled there !

And on the soft rug basking lies,
Outstretched at ease, the spotted friend,
With glowing coat and half-shut eyes,
Where watchfulness and slumber blend.

Welcome December's cheerful hour,
When books, with converse sweet combined,
And music's many-gifted power
Exalt, or soothe th' awakened mind.

Then, let the snow-wind shriek aloud,
And menace oft the guarded sash,
And all his diapason crowd,
As o'er the frame his white wings dash.

He sings of darkness and of storm,
Of icy cold and lonely ways ;
But, gay the room, the hearth more warm,
And brighter is the taper's blaze.

Then, let the merry tale go round,
And airy songs the hours deceive ;
And let our heart-felt laughs resound,
In welcome to December's Ève !¹

Is it fanciful to feel that from these scattered hints we have constructed at least the shadow of a personality? Certainly there is evidence of strength of character in a woman who could keep her private and her public life so resolutely apart, without, however, taking refuge in anonymous publication, as did many women writers of her day. Even though Mrs. Elwood attributes to her a mistaken idea of 'the incompatibility of the gentlewoman and the authoress,' the fact that she gave the sanction of her name to her productions seems to show that she recognized to some extent the dignity of literature as a profession. One critic finds Mrs. Radcliffe a pure type of femininity :

¹ *Posthumous Works* 4. 213.

There is a beauty in her mind, a gentleness, a delicacy, a retiredness in her disposition, which is wholly feminine, and which every man cannot but feel, who feels as a man ought towards woman.¹

It is true that the brief description of her person and manners gives us a decidedly feminine impression. But there are other critics who have called her mind 'masculine'; and, indeed, if the novels were anonymous, it might be difficult to decide whether a man or a woman was responsible for *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and *The Italian*.

Perhaps, as in the case of many people, the most interesting things we discover about her are the inconsistencies. She was retiring, almost shy, in disposition; and yet she was, for many years, probably the most widely known woman in England. Her physician tells us that she 'possessed a quick sensibility,' which 'would serve to increase the warmth of the social feelings'²; and yet we have no record of any friendships in which she played a part, no account of her by any close associate. Either she succeeded in impressing upon all her friends her desire for privacy, or her companionship with her husband was so completely satisfying that she did not care for other intimacies. Certainly her husband's note, at the end of the memoir which has been so often quoted, shows his devotion, in the desire to have those belated volumes in a sense a memorial to her:

The Editor of the present Publication, who is not the Writer of the preceding Memoir, is aware, that it would be unbecoming for him to say more of Works, written by one so dear to him, than may be necessary to give the Public an early assurance of their authenticity; and that fact, he apprehends, will be sufficiently proved by the distribution, which he has resolved to make, of the whole purchase-money of the copyright. Every part of that produce will be paid, as it shall accrue to him, to some public charitable institution in England. The Lord Bishop of

¹ *United States Review and Literary Gazette*, April, 1827.

² *Memoir*, p. 105.

Bath and Wells, and Sir Walter Stirling, Bart. in consideration of the utility of this purpose, allow him the honour of saying, that they will audit his account of that distribution.¹

The very thing which we are inclined to admire in Mrs. Radcliffe—her determination to keep her private life entirely separate from her literary fame—makes her an almost impossible subject for biography. Perhaps, however, we do gain a sufficiently definite impression to say this—the little we know of her makes us wish that we might know more.

¹ *Posthumous Works* 1. 132.

CHAPTER II

WORK

Section 1. Contemporary Estimates of her Work.

Mrs. Radcliffe's first book is noticed as follows in the *Critical Review* for September, 1789¹:

The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne, an Highland Story. 12mo. 3s. Hookham.

There is some fancy and much romantic imagery in the conduct of this story; but our pleasure would have been more unmixed had our author preserved better the manners and costume of the Highlands. He seems to be unacquainted with both.

The *Monthly Review* for December, 1789,² has a comment rather longer, but even less flattering:

To those who are delighted with the *marvellous*, whom wonders, and wonders only, can charm, the present production will accord a considerable degree of amusement. This kind of entertainment, however, can be little relished but by the young and unformed mind. To men who have passed, or even attained, the meridian of life, a series of events, which seem not to have their foundation in nature, will ever be insipid, if not disgusting. The author of this performance appears to have written on the principle of Mr. Bayes, to *elevate and surprise*. By means of *trap-doors, false pannels, subterranean passages*, etc. etc. this purpose is effected: and all this, as was before intimated, will possibly have its admirers. But though we are not of the number of such readers, we must honestly confess, that this little work is to be commended for its moral; as also for the good sentiments and reflections which occasionally occur in it.

The *Scots Magazine*, in its Appendix for 1789,³ repeats the last two or three lines of the notice just quoted—lines

¹ 68. 251.

² 81. 563.

³ 51. 645.

which furnish a shining example of the faint praise that damns. Especially does this phrase seem apt as we look through the book-reviews of the time. The reviewers seem to have had a bias toward morality, but they rarely mention its presence except when there is a total absence of anything else worthy of praise.

Mrs. Radcliffe's first attempt, then, created little excitement in the literary world. It is rather interesting, in view of Scott's later achievements, that she began with a Highland story, but just why she called it a Highland story is hard to understand. Probably the Highlands of Scotland had for her a suggestion of romance; but her imagination had not developed to such a degree that it could, as in the later books, almost take the place of knowledge. Placing her castle on the 'north-east coast of Scotland, in the most romantic part of the Highlands,' and bestowing Scotch names on a few of her characters, were her only steps in the direction of local color.

The reception of the second book, *A Sicilian Romance*, was rather more encouraging. The *Monthly Review*¹ said of it:

In this tale, we meet with something more than the alternate tears and rapture of tender lovers. The writer possesses a happy vein of invention, and a correctness of taste, which enable her to rise above the level of mediocrity. Romantic scenes, and surprizing events, are exhibited in elegant and animated language.

The *Critical Review*² was somewhat less enthusiastic, but took the story much more seriously than its predecessor:

This very interesting novel engages the attention, in defiance of numerous improbabilities and 'hair-breadth scapes' too often repeated. Perhaps, on second reading, these might be still more disgusting; but it is an experiment that we can scarcely venture to try but with modern novels of the first class. We found the

¹ 3. 91, September, 1790.

² N. Ar. 1. 350. March, 1791.

tale, we have said, very entertaining, and involved with art, developed with skill, and the event concealed with great dexterity. If our author again engaged in this task, we would advise her not to introduce so many caverns with such peculiar concealments, or so many spring-locks which open only on one side.

The *Scots Magazine*¹ again echoes the *Monthly Review*; its reviews seem to consist of abridgements of those in other magazines.

A Sicilian Romance, it seems, attracted some attention other than that of reviewers who read it as a matter of duty. Mrs. Elizabeth Carter, in her *Letters to Mrs. Montagu*, writes:

I have been reading with much pleasure the 'Sicilian Romance.' The language is elegant, the scenery exquisitely painted, the moral good, and the conduct and conclusion of the fable, I think, original. Have you read it? And do you know the name of the Authoress? I do not.²

All the announcements of the book had read, *By the Authoress of the Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne*. The account of *The Romance of the Forest*, which appears in the *Critical Review* for April, 1792,³ has this heading:

The Romance of the Forest; interspersed with some Pieces of Poetry. By the Authoress of 'A Sicilian Romance' etc. 3 vols. 9s. Sewed. Hookham.

The writer begins his review by saying:

We spoke with respect of the Sicilian Romance; but this lady, for by the term (authoress) we must suppose it to be the production of a female's pen, has greatly exceeded her first work.

He adds a note to this effect: 'In the advertisement to the second edition, she styles herself Ann Radcliffe, and we have

¹ 52. 438. September, 1790.

² 3. 323. December 15, 1790.

³ N. Ar. 4. 458. April, 1792.

no authority for prefixing Miss or Mrs.' The whole review is in a tone of such decided enthusiasm that the author seems to feel he may be criticized for going too far. He stands his ground, however, in his concluding words:

If it may appear, that we have commended this novel with an eager warmth, we can only say, in apology for it, that we have copied our real sentiments. The lady is wholly unknown to us, and probably will ever continue so. We must, however, consider 'The Romance of the Forest' as one of the first works in this line of novel-writing that we have seen.

Other reviews are equally commendatory. The *English Review*¹ begins its discussion with the statement:

Of modern novels, *The Romance of the Forest* must certainly be allowed to rank among the first class.

The *Monthly Review*² says:

'We have seldom met with a fiction which has more forcibly fixed the attention, or more agreeably interested the feelings, throughout the whole narrative.'

Both these reviewers give long extracts from the novel, to justify their praise of the author's style. In the *European Magazine* for October, 1795,³ we have a reference to the book, which the writer begins as follows:

In Mrs. Radcliffe's 'Romance of the Forest,' (a Novel far superior, I think, to her 'Mysteries of Udolpho') we have some pleasing speculations on the reunion of friends in a future state of existence; they deserve to be detached from the volume, and inserted in your valuable miscellany.

This quotation introduces a question upon which there has been some difference of opinion—that of the relative literary value of *The Romance of the Forest* and *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. Mrs. Barbauld, in her preface to Mrs.

¹ 20. 352. November, 1792.

² 8. 82. May, 1792.

³ 28. 230. October, 1795.

Radcliffe's works,¹ speaks of *The Romance of the Forest* as 'the first production of this lady, in which her peculiar genius was strikingly developed, . . . and in some respects . . . the best.' Later on, in referring to *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, she says: 'It abounds still more with instances of mysterious and terrific appearances, but has perhaps less of character, and a more imperfect story.' George Moir, on the other hand, in the seventh edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, gives his opinion as follows:

It may be said in a word, that the *Romance of the Forest*, founded on a French *cause célèbre*, has the fewest faults; that the *Italian*, though extremely unequal, and in the third volume a comparative failure, contains the most striking and dramatic scenes; but that the *Mysteries of Udolpho* is on the whole, and justly, considered the best.¹

Miss Anna Seward, in a letter written August 3, 1794,³ says:

Her *Mysteries of Udolpho* is a much superior work to her *Romance of the Forest*. The first volume of that is fine, the rest heavy, uninteresting, and contain very affected writing.

Some of the reviewers of *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, while giving it high praise, seem reluctant to consider it an advance over the earlier book. For instance, the *Critical Review* for August, 1794,⁴ has this statement:

With regard to the work before us, while we acknowledge the extraordinary powers of Mrs. Radcliffe, some readers will be inclined to doubt whether they have been exerted in the present work with equal effect as in the *Romance of the Forest*.

A preference for the one work or the other is probably a matter of personal fancy, although there may be some justice in the comment of a reviewer that the author might write a better story than *The Mysteries of Udolpho* 'when no

¹ *British Novelists*, Vol. 43.

² *Treatises on Poetry, Modern Romance and Rhetoric*, pp. 197-206.

³ *Letters* 3. 389.

⁴ 2. 262.

longer disposed to sacrifice excellence to quantity, and lengthen out a story for the sake of filling an additional volume.¹ Mrs. Kavanagh remarks that the title of *The Romance of the Forest* suggests some of the most delightful associations in English poetry—Robin Hood, and the Forest of Arden; that after Shakespeare there is a great gap in forest-literature, and that Mrs. Radcliffe is the first after him to give us once more woodland scenery in its freshness and beauty.

Certainly the charm of the out-of-doors is felt in *The Romance of the Forest*. Although the scene is presumably in France, it was undoubtedly the author's love of English woods that inspired her descriptions. Her devotion to Windsor Forest is mentioned by her biographers; we are told that she came to know certain trees there, and to feel a special fondness for them as individuals. English scenery was responsible for this new picture of life in a forest, just as unmistakably as Shakespeare's knowledge of English woodlands gave us the Forest of Arden.

One thing is beyond question. By the time of the publication of *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, Mrs. Radcliffe's place as an author was assured. The appearance of a new book bearing her name was evidently an important event in the literary world, for it is heralded for weeks in the columns of the *London Chronicle*, and the notices are always placed in a prominent position, as if the book were considered of especial importance. The first advertisement, on Thursday, April 24, 1794 (77-391), reads as follows:

In a few Days will be published,

In Four very large Volumes Twelves.

The Mysteries of Udolpho: A Romance; interspersed with some
Pieces of Poetry, etc.

By Ann Radcliffe,

Author of the Romance of the Forest, &c.

Printed for G. G. and J. Robinson, Paternoster row.

¹ *Critical Review* 2. 372. August, 1794.

The first notice of actual publication occurs in the *London Chronicle* for Saturday, May 10, 1794.

Incidentally it may be remarked that Mrs. Radcliffe's change of publisher possibly indicates her growing fame and prosperity as an author. In Rees and Britain's *Literary London, from 1779 to 1853* (p. 37), this reference is made to the Robinsons :

The Robinsons, at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries, when I first became acquainted with the firm, carried on the largest business of any house in London, as general publishers, and also as wholesale and retail book-sellers. . . . They published largely books of considerable size and of great value. The head of the firm was considered to have an excellent judgment in the difficult and often critical undertaking of the superintendence and management of the literary concerns of a publishing establishment. He greatly respected meritorious authors, and acted with singular liberality in his pecuniary dealings with them.

That a firm of such reputation was willing to pay £500 for a work of fiction is testimony to the distinction which the author had already attained.

The reviews of *The Mysteries of Udolpho* are many, and, for the most part, distinctly favorable. Almost invariably they are given the dignity of a leading place in the magazine, and most of the reviewers indulge in copious extracts to illustrate the author's style. A few quotations will show the general tone of the reviews.

The *Monthly Review* for November, 1794,¹ in a long and enthusiastic account of the book, contains these comments :

The works of this ingenious writer not only possess, in common with many other productions of the same class, the agreeable qualities of correctness of sentiment and elegance of style, but are also distinguished by a rich vein of invention, which supplies an endless variety of incidents to fill the imagination of the reader ; by an admirable ingenuity of contrivance to awaken his curiosity, and to bind him in the chains of suspense ; and

¹ 15. 278.

by a vigour of conception and a delicacy of feeling which are capable of producing the strongest sympathetic emotions, whether of pity or terror.

. . . The embellishments of the work are highly finished. The descriptions are rich, glowing, and varied: they discover a vigorous imagination and an uncommon command of language; and many of them would furnish admirable subjects for the pencil of the painter.

The *British Critic*¹ has a review almost as appreciative:

We so very seldom find in a work of imagination, those qualities combined, which are necessary to its successful accomplishment, that when the event does happen, we distinguish it as a place of repose from our severer labours, and are happy to beguile the hours of weariness and chagrin beneath the shade which fancy spreads around. A tale, regularly told, neither offending probability by its extravagance, nor fatiguing by its want of vivacity or incident, has ever been esteemed among those labours of the mind which the critic cannot disdain to commend, nor genius to introduce, and when it is further embellished by the charms of good writing, is the vehicle of ingenious sentiments, and inculcates the purest morality, it eminently takes the lead in that class of writings, which is professedly designed for entertainment.

Mrs. Radcliffe had before obtained considerable reputation, from the cultivation of this branch of literature, and we are happy that it has fallen to our province to record one of the best and most interesting of her works.

The only serious criticism brought against the book is in regard to the superabundance of description. The *European Magazine*² speaks of the author as 'minute even to tedious prolixity in her local descriptions,' but the reviewer takes off the curse from this criticism by adding, 'a weight which would have hung with deadening power about the neck of a composition not animated by the utmost vigour of imagination.'

¹ 4. 110. August, 1794.

² 25. 433. June, 1794.

Although some of the critics differ as to the relative literary value of *The Romance of the Forest* and *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, most of them agree that the latter was, of all Mrs. Radcliffe's novels, the most popular. This popularity is natural enough. The greater complication of the plot, the wider range of experience to which we are introduced, the increased number of thrills and surprises, and the really remarkable description of the Castle of Udolpho, all were calculated to appeal to the popular taste. Even now the charm has not wholly departed, if, forgetting to read critically, we submit ourselves to its power. We feel a little shiver of apprehension when the black pall on the bed slowly begins to rise. We share Emily's excitement and hope when, in her chamber in the gloomy castle, she hears the notes of a familiar song, and thinks that her lover is near. Talfourd's judgment is probably right when he says, 'Of all the romances in the world, this is perhaps the most romantic.'¹ It is, possibly, the excess of romance which has made the world tire of it.

Mrs. Radcliffe's next work was an attempt in an entirely different field—an account of her trip through Holland and Germany, and her visit to the English Lake-region. The notice of this publication appears in the *London Chronicle* for May 21, 1795. It received as much attention in the magazines as the novels had—in fact, even more, so far as space was concerned, for some of the magazines gave a review long enough to be divided among two or three numbers. Works of travel were popular at that time, and it seems to have been generally conceded that Mrs. Radcliffe's talent for description peculiarly fitted her for such writing. It was suggested, however, in some of the reviews, that she put too much of her strength into description of natural scenery, instead of studying men and manners. One

¹ *Memoir*, p. 126.

reviewer remarked that she looked at scenes 'not with the eye of a philosopher, but a landscape painter.'¹

The same review contains Mrs. Radcliffe's explanation of her use of the term *we*:

She observes, in a preface, 'that her journey having been performed in the company of her nearest relative and friend, the account of it has been written so much from their mutual observation, that there would be a deception in permitting the book to appear without some acknowledgment which may distinguish it from works entirely her own. The title-page would, therefore, have contained the joint names of her husband and herself, if this mode of appearing before the public, besides being thought by that relative a greater acknowledgment than was due to his share of the work, had not seemed liable to the imputation of a design to attract attention by extraordinary novelty. It is, however, necessary to her own satisfaction, that some notice should be taken of this assistance.'

Modern readers would probably find the *Journey through Holland* too exclusively a work of description. The books of travel which are popular to-day have more of the narrative-interest. Most of us would like better the informal notes of her journal, from which a few extracts have already been given. To quote from a review of the *Posthumous Works*:

They are far more interesting, and a thousand times more graphic, than her published Journal of her tour to Holland and Germany, where much of the original spirit of the sketches seems to have evaporated in the process of preparation for the press.

But for her contemporaries the *Journey* evidently possessed great interest, and some reviewers even seemed to feel that it was a work which deserved more serious consideration than the novels. The *Critical Review*,² for instance, remarks:

¹ *English Review* 26. 1. July, 1795.

² N. Ar. 14. 241. July, 1795.

The character of Mrs. Radcliffe's pen, for a peculiar felicity in the description of objects of fancy, has been acknowledged by universal suffrage. The repeated instances of this given in the 'Mysteries of Udolpho,' where the objects are fanciful, and the descriptions consequently arbitrary, and sometimes redundant, excited a public wish that she might engage in a work where the same talent should be necessarily employed to delineate the grandeur, beauty, or sublimity of real scenery, and where the recurrence of description, following only the exhibitions of nature, should not be oppressive. Such a work is now before us, and we have not been disappointed in the expectations we were taught to form.

Another bit of testimony as to contemporary opinion is given by Thomas Green in his *Diary of a Lover of Literature*, in the entry for May 26, 1800:

Read Mrs. Radcliffe's *Tour to the Lakes*. Much might perhaps be expected from this Lady's well known powers of description, exerted on so congenial a theme: but to paint from the imagination, and to copy nature, are such different achievements, that I was surprised, I confess, to find that she had succeeded so well, and failed so little. Her pictures, though somewhat overwrought and heavy compared with the expressive etchings of Gray, exhibit as clear distinct and forcible images to the mind's eye, as it is well possible for words to convey. Such a series of them 'where pure description holds the place of sense,' would probably pall on most palates; but so strong a passion do I feel for the keen delights of picturesque and mountain scenery, that I was gratified, I own, to the last.¹

The Italian was first announced in December, 1796. About this book there has been more difference of opinion than about any of the others. To some critics it was the high-water mark of Mrs. Radcliffe's achievement; to others it showed a distinct falling-off. Modern opinion would perhaps incline toward the former view. This story has more unity of plot than the others; it has more real delineation of character; and its suggestion of the supernatural is, if anything, more impressive than that in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*.

¹ *Diary of a Lover of Literature*, p. 225.

Most of the reviewers unite in considering the monk, Schedoni, as the most successful of Mrs. Radcliffe's characters. Some, indeed, find fault with him as being too appallingly wicked, while others assert that, when she tries to soften his character by a touch of parental affection, he becomes unreal. But certainly he makes upon us the impression of a personality; he is not, as Hazlitt said of her heroes—Valancourt, Theodore, and the rest—merely 'a sounding name, a graceful form.'¹

One interesting comment on the book is made by a writer in the *United States Review and Literary Gazette*.²

No one, who thinks of the new power which seems suddenly to have developed itself in 'The Italian,' but must feel sorry that she did not set about another work while her mind was yet glowing with the exercise of that she had just finished. We allude to the masterly dialogues in that greatest of her works, particularly in the interview between the Marchesa and Schedoni in the church of San Nicolo; that between Schedoni and Spalatro, when the latter refuses to murder Ellena; and in the scene, also, in which Schedoni discovers Ellena to be his daughter. The deadly shrewdness, the sophistry with a mixture of emotion in the first; the close, abrupt and highly impassioned character of the next, and those following, have seldom been approached by any novelist. It is this which puts life, indeed, into a story, and when we think what Mrs. Radcliffe might have done, had she gone on thus, we cannot but feel sad at what we have lost.

This praise seems, on the whole, just. Although passages can be found in *The Italian* in which the conversation is artificial and out of character, and although the faithful servant Paulo strikes us as being wearisomely prosy rather than amusing, the passages mentioned are certainly different from anything found in the earlier novels. Mrs. Radcliffe here uses dialogue as a means both of revealing character and of advancing the action; and she does it skilfully.

¹ *Sketches and Essays*, p. 267.

² 2. 1. April, 1827.

Schedoni as a character is inevitably connected with Schedoni as an actor in the most dramatic scene of the book. It is melodrama if you like, but it is melodrama raised to its most successful pitch, if we can trust its effect upon contemporary opinion.

The *Monthly Review*¹ says of this scene:

The part, however, which displays the greatest genius, and the most force of description, is the account of the scenes which passed in the lone house on the shore of the Adriatic, between Schedoni, Ellena, and Spalatro:—the horrible sublimity which characterizes the discovery made by the former that Ellena was his daughter, at the instant in which he was about to stab her, is perhaps unparalleled.

The *Edinburgh Review*,² in commenting upon Mrs. Radcliffe's powers of description, refers to the same passage:

Do we not actually see before us that lone house by the Mediterranean, with the scudding clouds, the screaming sea-birds, the stormy sea—the scene selected for the murder of Ellena by her father?

Dr. Nathan Drake, in his *Literary Hours* (1. 361), calls Mrs. Radcliffe 'the Shakespeare of Romance Writers,' and goes on to say:

In her last piece, termed *The Italian*, the attempt of Schedoni to assassinate the amiable and innocent Ellena, whilst confined with banditti in a lone house on the sea-shore, is wrought up in so masterly a manner, that every nerve vibrates with pity and terror, especially at the moment when, about to plunge a dagger into her bosom, he discovers her to be his daughter; every word, every action of the shocked and self-accusing Confessor, whose character is marked with traits almost super-human, appal yet delight the reader, and it is difficult to ascertain whether ardent curiosity, intense commiseration, or apprehension that suspends almost the faculty of breathing, be, in the progress of this well-written story, most powerfully excited.

¹ 22. 282. March, 1797.

² July, 1834.

It must be admitted that there were opinions less favorable to the book. Green said,¹ 'This work will maintain, but not extend Mrs. Radcliffe's fame as a novelist.' Anna Seward² declared that 'the story, . . . as usual, toils after the terrible; but produces it, surely, with less effect than in her former productions.'

A writer in the *English Review*³ seems to account very reasonably for the disappointment which some people felt in reading *The Italian*:

It was impossible to raise curiosity and expectation to a higher pitch than she has done in her *Mysteries of Udolpho*; yet these mysteries she accounted for in a natural manner. The reader of *The Italian* now before us sits down with this conviction. As children who have been frightened, by an ideal bugbear, and afterwards convinced that there was nothing in it, will cry, 'No, no! we know what it is; you cannot frighten us again:' so, we acknowledge, does the perusal of the present romance affect us.

It seems very probable that, had *The Italian* appeared before Mrs. Radcliffe had so thoroughly accustomed the public to her habit of explaining away her terrors, it would have been universally considered, as it was considered by many critics, the best of her works. Scott speaks with especial enthusiasm of the opening scene of the story,⁴ and he is inclined to defend the scenes dealing with the Inquisition, which had received rather more unfavorable criticism than the rest of the book.

The Italian was the last publication which appeared in Mrs. Radcliffe's lifetime, with the exception of a slim volume of poems, dated London, 1816. This volume has the following rather puzzling preface:

The Editor of this little volume trusts that he need not offer any apology for presenting it to the public. The genius of the

¹ *Diary of a Lover of Literature*, p. 28.

² *Letters* 4. 382.

³ 28. 574. December, 1796.

⁴ *Lives of the Novelists*, p. 218.

author has been universally acknowledged. The merit of the different pieces which compose this collection, is variable—some are beautiful, and bear every mark of a poetical imagination. Her genius was of the sterling kind, and partook much of the masculine character: and the Editor feels assured that this volume will be welcome to those who have repeatedly been delighted by the efforts of that genius! whose souls have started, and whose eyes have wept, at the scenes of terror and pity which she has portrayed. That her genius was poetical is proved by the beautiful and sublime descriptions of scenery with which her romances abound—descriptions seldom equalled, and, perhaps, no where surpassed.

The Editor has only to add, that the pieces which occur beyond page 95 are his own, with whatever faults, therefore, they are chargeable, they are to be placed to his own account.

One would suppose that such a preface could be written only by a close relative of the author, and that only one nearly connected would presume to finish out a volume of her poems with his own. But when we remember the careful reserve with which Mr. Radcliffe spoke of his wife's work, even after her death, we feel that this is not at all in his style. Moreover, the past tense used throughout would prevent us from ascribing it to him, for it would seem to imply that the writer supposed Mrs. Radcliffe to be no longer living. No help can be found in reviews, for the volume seems to have attracted no attention.

With so long a gap—from *The Italian* in 1796 to her posthumous works in 1826—one might fancy that Mrs. Radcliffe would have been entirely forgotten. Nothing shows more conclusively the place she had occupied in public favor than the lively interest with which these last volumes were received. The book was advertised, before its publication, even more extensively than the earlier ones had been. The *Morning Chronicle* began announcing it on March 20. The announcement, the first in the column and in large type, read:

The following new works will shortly be published by Mr. Colburn.

Gaston de Blondeville; a Romance, with some Poetical Pieces. By Anne Radcliffe, Author of *The Romance of the Forest, Mysteries of Udolpho, Italian*, etc. To which will be prefixed, a Memoir of the Author, and Extracts from her Diary. Published from the originals, in the possession of William Radcliffe, Esq. 4 vols. post 8vo.

The same announcement, or practically the same, followed at intervals of a few days, ten times during the next three months, until finally, on June 12, 1826, the actual publication was announced. Before this final announcement, there appeared on June 6 an advertisement of the complete works of Mrs. Radcliffe:

Mrs. Radcliffe's Works:—The whole of the Works of the above celebrated Authoress can be had complete (embellished with numerous Engravings) in the two first volumes of Limbird's British Novelist, for the trifling sum of Ten Shillings in boards.—Vol. I contains *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, and *The Sicilian Romance*.—Vol. II contains *The Romance of the Forest, Italian*, and *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne*.—Vols. III and IV are nearly ready for delivery, price 5s. each.

Printed and published by J. Limbird, 143, Strand, London.

That news of the posthumous novel had spread even before the first announcement quoted above, and that it had reached the literary public of America, as well as that of England, is shown by an item in the *Museum of Foreign Literature and Science*, published in Philadelphia and New York¹:

Mr. Colburn will shortly publish a Romance by Ann Radcliffe, author of 'The Mysteries of Udolpho,' etc. This announcement will, no doubt, excite the greatest interest among all classes of the 'reading public,' who will eagerly welcome a new and genuine work by the 'Great Enchantress,' whose pen has apparently been so long idle. The forthcoming Romance would have been published some years ago, had not the Author's nervous temperament, arising from the state of her health (which declined soon after the work in question was finished) made her hesitate

¹8. 94. January, 1826. (N. S. I.)

to plunge again in the bustle of literary competition; and being in affluent circumstances, she could afford to indulge in the leisure and privacy she so much loved. Since the death of this celebrated lady, which took place in 1823, Mr. Radcliffe, her husband, has yielded to the solicitations pressed on him, and has consented that her last Romance, which will be found quite worthy of her fame, should be given to the world.

The judgments of the critics in regard to *Gaston de Blondville* show an amusing and bewildering variety.

The *Edinburgh Magazine*¹ declares:

Mrs. Radcliffe has long borne undisputed, and almost solitary sway over the regions of romance; and the book we shall now refer to is certainly one of her own magical writing. If external evidence were needed to establish the latter position, it would find sufficient support in the intrinsic worth of the composition.

The *Monthly Review*,² on the other hand, pronounces a quite contrary opinion:

We must, nevertheless, take the liberty to say, that if the authenticity of the posthumous writings now before us had not been placed beyond all doubt, we should have hesitated to believe that they had proceeded from the author of 'The Mysteries of Udolpho.'

The *London Literary Gazette*³ says that the romance is, 'to our taste, much finer than the other works of the author,' and adds:

In this romance, Mrs. Radcliffe has abandoned the principle to which she confined herself in her former works, and has taken advantage of *ghostly aid*. A spectre is introduced as a principal agent in the awful plot of *Gaston de Blondville*; and we venture to anticipate that this unearthly being will be pronounced one of the most solemn creatures in our language.

Again, the opposite opinion is presented in the *Edinburgh Review*⁴:

¹ 18. 703. June, 1826.

² N. S. 2. 280. July, 1826.

³ May 27, 1826.

⁴ July, 1834.

If anything . . . could reconcile us to Mrs. Radcliffe's system of explaining every thing by natural causes in her former romances, it would be to see how completely in this she has failed in the management of a true spirit.

For the most part, however, the reviewers seem to have welcomed the publication of these posthumous works as an opportunity for a *résumé* and appreciation of Mrs. Radcliffe's work in general. The article in the *Edinburgh Review*, just quoted, was a review, not of *Gaston de Blondenville* in particular, but of the poems which accompanied it, which had been reprinted, and apparently announced as new volumes, in 1834. The ending of the review resembles many of the others in the almost affectionate admiration which it shows for Mrs. Radcliffe, even while recognizing some of her imperfections :

We must now bid adieu to these poems. They are little calculated certainly to increase the reputation of Mrs. Radcliffe; and perhaps her friends would have acted more judiciously if they had allowed them to remain in that obscurity in which they were left by their amiable authoress. Yet we are glad of the opportunity they have afforded us of expressing our admiration of her powers as a writer of romance, and of reviving in some measure the recollection of that fascination which her scenes of beauty and terror once exercised over our fancy. That a critical perusal of them at the present moment, with the cool eye of middle age, would probably point out to us many incongruities, and many weaknesses, is very probable. It is an experiment which we should take care not to hazard. We prefer leaving them as they float at present in our memory, here and there freshly remembered in their better parts, the rest fading into distance and half forgotten; on the whole, a pleasing pageant of gloomy castles and caves,—moon-illumined streets and palaces,—dance and Provençal song, and vintage mirth,—aërial music floating over fairy-haunted forests,—or choral chant of monk or nun, borne to the ear over the still waters of the Adriatic.

Looking over the reviews of Mrs. Radcliffe's work, one finds them, on the whole, distinctly favorable. Indeed, most

of them are more than this; they are warmly enthusiastic. Even the first book, weak as it is in comparison with her later efforts, is spoken of in terms that would not entirely discourage a young author. *A Sicilian Romance*, as we have seen, received a considerable degree of praise, and from the time of the publication of *The Romance of the Forest*, probably no writer of fiction could vie with her in popularity. The reviews of her posthumous works give more general comment on her position as an author than the reviews of individual novels. One¹ speaks of her as 'the finest writer in this kind of fiction that ever existed,' and as 'confessedly at the head of her class.' Another² refers to the volumes of poetry published in 1834 as 'the last relic of a highly-gifted and amiable mind, which, in its day, exercised no mean influence over the spirit of literature, and the charm of whose productions has perhaps been acknowledged more universally, and with less dispute, than that of any other writer of fiction.' The same writer goes on to say that Mrs. Radcliffe's reputation has suffered from the many imitators who tried to use her methods, without possessing her skill:

But Mrs. Radcliffe was as truly an inventor, a great and original writer in the department she had struck out for herself—whether that department was of the highest kind or not—as the Richardsons, Fieldings, and Smolletts, whom she succeeded and for a time threw into the shade; or the Ariosto of the North, before whom her own star has paled its ineffectual fires.

When we consider the almost unanimous expressions of admiration which these reviews contain, the suggestion in some of the obituary notices that unfavorable criticism caused Mrs. Radcliffe to give up her writing seems hardly reasonable. It is true that certain of the reviews contained qualifying judgments—that many critics objected to her

¹ *London Literary Gazette*, May 27, 1826.

² *Edinburgh Review*, July, 1834.

use of description, or detected errors in her local color. But the praise far overbalanced the blame, and no author of sense could object to intelligent and reasonable criticism.

The only comment which might have seriously hurt the feelings of a writer sensitive to public opinion is found in an article on *Terrorist Novel Writing* in the *Spirit of Public Journals* for 1797.¹ This is in the form of a letter, ridiculing the novels 'in which it has been the fashion to make *terror* the *order of the day*,' and it is followed by a note which has a rather sneering tone:

It is easy to see that the satire of this letter is particularly levelled at a literary lady of considerable talent, who has presented the world with three novels, in which she has found out the secret of making us 'fall in love with what we fear to look on.' . . . The *system of terror* which she has adopted is not the only reproach to which she is liable. Besides the tedious monotony of her descriptions, she affects in the most disgusting manner a knowledge of languages, countries, customs, and objects of art of which she is lamentably ignorant. She suspends *tripods* from the ceiling by chains, not knowing that a tripod is a utensil standing upon three feet.—She covers the kingdom of Naples with India figs because St. Pierre has introduced those tropical plants in his tales, of which the scene is laid in India—and she makes a convent of monks a necessary appendage to a monastery of nuns. This shows how well a lady understands the wants of her sex. Whenever she introduces an Italian word it is sure to be a gross violation of the language. Instead of making a nobleman's servant call him *Padrone*, or *Illustrissimo*, she makes him address him by the title of *Macstro*, which is Italian for a teacher. She converts the singular of *Lazzaroni* into Lazzaro, etc. etc. etc.

This lady's husband told a friend that he was going to Germany with his wife, the object of whose journey was to pick up materials for a novel. I think in that case answered his friend, that you had better let her go alone!

It would seem, however, that, if there were enough unfavorable criticisms to affect Mrs. Radcliffe to any great

¹ I. 323.

degree, they must have appeared, not in magazines of the better class, but in more ephemeral periodicals, not accessible to us to-day.

One sure testimony to popularity is imitation, and of that Mrs. Radcliffe had her full share. This has been unfortunate for her reputation, for not enough distinction has been made between the original and the very inferior copies. From about 1795 on, we find reviewed a constant succession of novels, the only distinction of which seems to be a more or less successful imitation of Mrs. Radcliffe's style. A review of *Austenburn Castle*, in 1796,¹ tells us the plight of the reviewer:

Since Mrs. Radcliffe's justly admired and successful romances, the press has teemed with stories of haunted castles and visionary terrors; the incidents of which are so little diversified, that criticism is at a loss to vary its remarks.

A reference to the number of imitations occurs in a review of *Valombrosa, or the Venetian Nun*, in 1805²:

Amongst the numerous, or, to speak with more propriety, innumerable, imitations of 'the Mysteries of Udolpho,' with which the press has groaned, we must rank the present production.

As late as 1812, when we should imagine Mrs. Radcliffe's vogue to have been somewhat past, we have notice of another attempt to rival her, *Rosalie, or the Castle of Montalbretti*.³

One thing is noticeable—that the reviewers all make careful distinction between Mrs. Radcliffe and her imitators, a distinction which later critics have not always observed. The same attitude is taken as a rule by her contemporaries whenever they comment upon her. They seem to have realized that she had originated, or at least developed to a high degree, a really new style of writing, and that she was

¹ *Critical Review*, N. Ar. 16. 222.

² *Critical Review*, N. Ar. 43. 329.

³ *Monthly Review* 67. 320.

not responsible for the abuse which it received at the hands of lesser authors. This attitude is expressed in a passage in one of Miss Seward's letters, August 3, 1794¹:

I read not, neither doubtless do you, the Novel trash of the day. Hours are too precious for such frivolous waste, where the mind has in itself any valuable resources; yet are there a few pens which possess the power so to inspirit those fond fancies of the brain, as to render them gratifying to an imagination which demands more to please it than amorous story. Mrs. Radcliffe's pen is of this number. Though she aims not at the highly important morality of the great Richardson, nor possesses scarce a portion of his ample, his matchless ability, in discriminating characters,

'Yet does she mount, and keep her distant way
Above the limits of the vulgar page.'

A book entitled *Literary Memoirs of Living Authors of Great Britain*, published in 1798, speaks of Mrs. Radcliffe as 'a lady of great distinction in the literary world as a Novel-writer. . . . Her powers of pleasing, in this line of composition, are very singularly great; and the happy combination of various talents which her pieces display, entitles their author to rank among the first novel-writers of her age.' Two French biographical works, published shortly after her death, have extended notices of her:—the *Biographie Universelle*,² and the *Biographie Nouvelle des Contemporains*.³

This discussion of Mrs. Radcliffe as estimated by her contemporaries has, of necessity, presented many anonymous judgments, for the reviews in magazines of the time were, for the most part, unsigned. They are important, however, since the leading magazines reflected to a considerable extent the general literary opinion. One might with good excuse include here the opinions of some of the more famous

¹ *Letters* 3. 389.

² 36. 525.

³ Vol. 17.

authors who were practically her contemporaries—men like Hazlitt and Leigh Hunt, Byron and Shelley. But their period of production came later than hers, so that they seem to belong to a different generation. Moreover, their judgments of her, and the general question of her influence upon them, have been already more discussed than the points which I am intending to treat here. My attempt has been to show how Mrs. Radcliffe's books were received on their appearance, to consider her as an active writer, rather than to estimate her influence upon the literature of a later period.

It is well to remember, however, that not only those of her own generation, but many in the generation succeeding, read her works with interest and admiration. In the Romantic movement she was a transitional figure, developing and passing on to the later men tendencies and themes with which the earlier ones had been experimenting; and it was her extreme popularity, as shown in these contemporary expressions, which enabled her to pass on so much.

Section 2. Sources of the Novels.

The first two of Mrs. Radcliffe's novels point to no very definite source. They show in general more influence from Walpole and Clara Reeve than the later books. *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne* resembles *The Castle of Otranto* in having for one of its principal characters a noble-natured young man, supposedly a peasant, who turns out to be a long-missing heir, and who finally makes a happy marriage. The same theme was used in *The Old English Baron*.

A Sicilian Romance uses Walpole's scheme of pretending to find his story in an old manuscript. The story itself, however, does not show much resemblance to either of its predecessors, unless we see in the Marquis' cruel and unjust treatment of his wife and daughters some suggestion of *The Castle of Otranto*.

In *The Romance of the Forest* Mrs. Radcliffe seems to declare her source frankly:

Whoever has read Guyot de Pitaval, the most faithful of those writers who record the proceedings in the Parliamentary Courts of Paris, during the seventeenth century, must surely remember the striking story of Pierre de la Motte, and the Marquis Phillipe de Montalt; let all such, therefore, be informed, that the person here introduced to their notice was that individual Pierre de la Motte.¹

A search through de Pitaval's *Causes Célèbres*, however, has failed to reveal any suit recorded under these names. The only place, apparently, where the name La Motte occurred, was in connection with an entirely different suit. Whether Mrs. Radcliffe took some one of the stories, and changed the names, or whether she merely ascribed her story to de Pitaval, to have a plausible-sounding source, seems uncertain.

Mrs. Radcliffe would have been most likely to know de Pitaval, perhaps, in a series of stories which were translated and adapted from the *Causes Célèbres* by Charlotte Smith, in 1787, under the title *The Romance of Real Life*. The probability that she was familiar with this work is increased by the fact that she and Charlotte Smith both have the same misspelling of de Pitaval's name, writing it *Guyot* instead of *Gayot*. One of these stories might have given some suggestion for *The Romance of the Forest*. This is the account of *Mademoiselle de Choiseul*. In this, the Duke de la Valliere promised his sister to take care of her child:

. . . but when he found that, by suppressing what he knew of her birth, he should divide considerable property as heir to that sister, he scrupled not to violate every promise he had given her, not only on the birth of her child, but again when she was dying; and now, when her daughter claimed her own property, desired to have authentic proof of what he knew better than any one—proofs, which it was more difficult for her to bring, as all

¹ *Romance of the Forest*, p. 2.

the family papers were in the hands of the very person who demanded them, and whose interest it was to conceal every memorial of the contested fact.¹

This is not unlike the situation in *The Romance of the Forest*. Here the Marquis has actually had his brother put to death, in order to get the money which that brother had inherited from his wife. The young daughter is put in a convent, and, when she refuses to take the veil, the Marquis orders her death. When, later on, he finds that she has escaped his cruel commands, he tells La Motte to kill her. Again his tool fails to obey. At the end of the story the truth is revealed. Adeline is to appear in a trial-scene under very similar circumstances to those in *The Romance of Real Life*, when the trial is made unnecessary by the suicide of the Marquis.

We still find in *The Romance of the Forest* details inherited from Walpole and Clara Reeve. One of the most striking resemblances in situation is Adeline's dream when she has been reading the manuscript she finds in the room net hers in the old abbey.² It is very similar to Edmund's dream in *The Old English Baron*, and the cause is the same. Adeline, like Edmund, is sleeping near the unburied bones of her father. Incidentally it may be remarked that this is one touch of the supernatural which Mrs. Radcliffe does not explain away.

In regard to *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, one source is mentioned by Green in his *Diary of a Lover of Literature*³:

Read the first volume of Mrs. Piozzi's Travels in Italy. Tolerably amusing, but for a pert flippancy, and ostentation of learning. Mrs. Radcliffe has taken from this work her vivid description of Venice and of the Brenta, but oh! how improved in the transcript.

¹ *Romance of Real Life* 3. 136.

² I. 269.

³ Nov. 25, 1800. Quoted in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, N. S. I. 10.

This suggestion is interesting, because it shows us something of Mrs. Radcliffe's methods of work. She evidently had more groundwork of fact in her descriptions than she was sometimes given credit for; she took the authentic record of actual travel, and let her imagination play about it. A comparison of a few passages from *The Mysteries of Udolpho* with corresponding passages from Mrs. Piozzi's *Journey* will show that one was undoubtedly the source of the other; in fact, at times the resemblance is so close that we wonder that Mrs. Piozzi did not claim credit as a collaborator.

Take first the description of the Brenta itself. Mrs. Piozzi's version¹:

It was on the twenty-first of May then that we returned up the Brenta in a barge to *Padua*, stopping from time to time to give refreshment to our conductors and their horse, which draws on the side, as one sees them at Richmond; where the banks are scarcely more beautifully adorned by art, than here by nature; though the Brenta is a much narrower river than the Thames at Richmond, and its villas, so justly celebrated, far less frequent. The sublimity of their architecture however, the magnificence of their orangeries, the happy construction of the cool arcades, and general air of festivity which breathes upon the banks of this truly *wizard stream*, planted with *dancing*, not weeping willows, to which on a bright evening the lads and lasses run for shelter from the sun beams, *Et fugit ad salices, et se cupit ante videri*; are I suppose, peculiar to itself.

Mrs. Radcliffe's²:

The noble Brenta, pouring its broad waves into the sea, now appeared, and, when she reached its mouth, the barge stopped, that the horses might be fastened which were to tow it up the stream. This done, Emily gave a last look to the Adriatic, and to the dim sail,

That from the sky-mix'd wave
Dawns on the sight,

¹ *Observations and Reflections made in the Course of a Journey through France, Italy and Germany*, p. 221.

² *Mysteries of Udolpho* 2. 121.

and the barge slowly glided between the green and luxuriant slopes of the river. The grandeur of the Palladian villas, that adorn these shores, was considerably heightened by the setting rays, which threw strong contrasts of light and shade upon the porticos and long arcades, and beamed a mellow lustre upon the orangeries and tall groves of pine and cypress, that overhung the buildings. The scent of oranges, of flowering myrtles, and other odoriferous plants was diffused upon the air, and often, from these embowered retreats, a strain of music stole on the calm, and 'softened into silence.'

Mrs. Radcliffe here makes an addition very characteristic of her—the setting sun. She is rarely content to give us merely the features of the landscape; she shows them as affected by atmospheric conditions. Also her description becomes more vivid than Mrs. Piozzi's from her inclusion of odors and sounds, as well as those things which appeal to the sense of sight. Both give much the same impression of the ladies of Venice.

Mrs. Piozzi¹:

A Venetian lady has in particular so sweet a manner naturally that she really charms without any settled intent to do so, merely from that irresistible good-humor and mellifluous tone of voice which seize the soul, and detain it in despite of Juno-like majesty, or Minerva-like wit.

Mrs. Radcliffe²:

In the evening, Madame Montoni . . . received visits from some Venetian ladies, with whose sweet manners Emily was particularly charmed. They had an air of ease and kindness towards the strangers, as if they had been their familiar friends for years; and their conversation was by turns tender, sentimental, and gay.

Another comparison will show that one of Mrs. Radcliffe's most famous passages,³ although she—once more

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 183.

² *Op. cit.*, p. 67.

³ The one which Byron recalls in *Childe Harold*, Canto 4, stanza 1.

aided by the setting sun—has added much, is not entirely her own inspiration.

Mrs. Piozzi¹:

St. Mark's place, after all I had read and all I had heard of it, exceeded expectation; such a cluster of excellence, such a constellation of artificial beauties, my mind had never ventured to excite the idea of within herself; though assisted with all the powers of doing so which painters can bestow, and with all the advantages derived from verbal and written description. . . . The general effect produced by such architecture, such painting, such pillars; illuminated as I saw them last night by the moon at full, rising out of the sea, produced an effect like enchantment. . . . From the top [of the tower in St. Mark's Place] is presented to one's sight the most striking of all prospects, water bounded by land—not land by water. The curious and elegant islets upon which, and into which, the piles of Venice are driven, exhibiting clusters of houses, churches, palaces, every thing—started up in the midst of the sea, so as to excite amazement.

Mrs. Radcliffe²:

Nothing could exceed Emily's admiration, on her first view of Venice, with its islets, palaces, and towers rising out of the sea, whose clear surface reflected the tremulous picture in all its colours. The sun, sinking in the west, tinted the waves and the lofty mountains of Friuli, which skirts the northern shores of the Adriatic, with a saffron glow, while on the marble porticos and colonnades of St. Mark were thrown the rich lights and shades of evening. As they glided on, the grander features of this city appeared more distinctly; its terraces, crowned with airy yet majestic fabrics, touched, as they now were, with the splendour of the setting sun, appeared as if they had been called up from the ocean by the wand of an enchanter, rather than reared by mortal hands.

Several other passages might be quoted, but these are probably enough to show Mrs. Radcliffe's debt to Mrs. Piozzi.

¹ *Observations*, etc., p. 151.

² *Mysteries of Udolpho* 2. 35.

Another possible source for the trip on the Brenta may be found in Schiller's *Ghostseer*¹:

Our little voyage was exceedingly delightful. A picturesque country, which at every winding of the river seemed to increase in richness and beauty; the serenity of the sky, which formed a May day in the middle of February; the charming gardens and elegant country-seats which adorned the banks of the Brenta; the majestic city of Venice behind us, with its lofty spires, and a forest of masts, rising as it were out of the waves; all this afforded us one of the most splendid prospects in the world.

One difficulty here, however, is that the English translation of *Der Geisterseher* did not appear until 1795, too late to have had any influence upon *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. Unless we are to think that Mrs. Radcliffe was familiar with the original, we must consider the resemblance in the passages as merely accidental. We have perhaps no positive reason for concluding that she did not know the original. Buyers, in an article on *The Influence of Schiller's Drama and Fiction upon English Literature*,² says:

Mrs. Radcliffe, apparently, knew no German, nor are there any references to German literature in her account of a *Journey through Holland and the western frontier of Germany*.

This is, however, rather negative proof. Moreover, Buyers seems to forget his own conclusion when to his statement, 'Schedoni alone of Mrs. Radcliffe's characters seems to owe something to the influence of Schiller,' he adds this note:

Since this was written, it has struck me that very possibly Montoni may be a fearsome blend of the Armenian and the brothers Moor.

If *The Ghostseer* could influence the character of Montoni, Mrs. Radcliffe must certainly have had some knowledge of the book prior to the writing of *The Mysteries of Udolpho*.

¹ P. 384.

² *Englische Studien* 48. 350.

Buyers seems justified in pointing out Mrs. Radcliffe's indebtedness to *The Ghostseer* in *The Italian*, although he is perhaps not quite accurate in saying that Schiller's influence is found only in the character of Schedoni. It is not Schedoni who speaks in the voice of warning and prophecy; it is the mysterious monk of Paluzzi, Schedoni's enemy.

But, as he points out, there are several scenes which show striking similarity. One which he mentions takes place between Vivaldi and the monk, when Vivaldi is on his way to see Ellena:

'You are too late,' said a sudden voice beside Vivaldi, who instantly recognized the thrilling accents of the monk. 'It is past midnight; she departed an hour ago. Look to your steps!'

This certainly does suggest the words of the Armenian, in *The Ghostseer*. 'Neun Uhr.' 'Wünschen sie sich Glück, prinz. Um neun Uhr ist er gestorben.'

Vivaldi's comment is:

I am warned of evils that await me, of events that are regularly fulfilled; the being who warns me crosses my path perpetually, yet, with the cunning of a demon, as constantly eludes my grasp and baffles my pursuit.

This is very much like the reflection in *The Ghostseer*¹:

A superior power attends me. Omniscience surrounds me. An invisible Being whom I cannot escape, watches over my steps.

Mrs. Radcliffe also may have been indebted to *The Ghostseer* for Schedoni's crime—the murder of his brother in order to marry the brother's wife.

One other resemblance may be pointed out between the two works. The Sicilian's explanation of his tricks, after he has puzzled his audience with them, may suggest Mrs. Radcliffe's method of explaining the apparently supernatural. We could hardly give Schiller the credit of originating her method, however, since she used it to some extent from the first.

¹ P. 386.

Another question of comparison occurs in the consideration of *The Italian*. This is the question of its connection with *The Monk* of Matthew Gregory Lewis.

Lewis made the statement in a letter to his mother¹ that it was the reading of *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, during his trip abroad, which gave him the inspiration to go on with the romance which he had begun. It seems possible that Lewis' novel had some reciprocal influence upon Mrs. Radcliffe's work, at least to the extent of leading her to select a monk as her central figure. She had, it is true, made considerable use of religious machinery in her earlier books. In *A Sicilian Romance* Julia takes refuge in a convent, and so does Emily in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. Mrs. Radcliffe's attitude toward monastic life is interesting: as an artist she seems to have been fascinated by it; as a human being, she was repelled.

This mixture of feeling comes out in her comment on some of the English Lake scenery, where she is remarking on its resemblance to the Rhine:

Once too, there were other points of resemblance, in the ruins of monasteries and convents, which, though reason rejoices that they no longer exist, the eye may be allowed to regret.²

In *The Italian*, however, the dominating power is the Church; and the figure of Schedoni—sinister, mysterious, and apparently austere, but inwardly depraved—is not unlike Lewis' conception of his Monk. In part this resemblance may be explained by the theory that both have a common source. A review of *The Monk*³ suggests that the character of the wandering Jew, in Lewis' book, is 'copied as to its more prominent features from Schiller's incomprehensible Armenian.' The Armenian may also in some details have influenced Lewis' picture of his monk, and Mrs. Radcliffe's

¹ *Life and Correspondence of M. G. Lewis* 1. 123.

² *Journey* 2. 250.

³ *Critical Review*, N. Ar. 19. 194.

inspiration for Schedoni may have come directly from *The Ghostseer*, and not from Lewis at all. It would not seem unlikely, however, that, finding him successful with this theme, she resolved to try her hand at it. Lewis' book was probably the only one of the time which rivaled Mrs. Radcliffe's works in popularity. It made a considerable stir, in spite of the widespread condemnation of its morals. She might have thought it worth while to attempt a study in the same field, which should, however, not be open to the same objections on the score of morality.

One passage in the *Journey through Holland*¹ seems to point toward *The Italian*. It suggests that Mrs. Radcliffe was not wholly indebted to other writers, but that her own impressions helped to shape the figure of Schedoni:

Here two Capuchins, belonging probably to the convent above, as they walked along the shore, beneath the dark cliffs of Boppart, wrapt in the long black drapery of their order, and their heads shrowded in cowls, that half concealed their faces, were interesting figures in a picture, always gloomily sublime.

This recalls the scene in which Ellena, trying to escape from the house where she has been confined, meets the gloomy form of the monk on the sea-shore, and is followed by him until she is forced to return.

Mrs. Radcliffe's travels came too late to influence her earlier books. The last, *Gaston de Blondville*, seems to owe its inspiration almost entirely to one of her expeditions, her visit to Kenilworth in 1802. Several passages occur in her account of the trip which seem to contain suggestions of the story which she developed. One is in her description of Warwick Castle²:

But what struck me most was near the end of the gallery (when it makes a sudden turn into the tower that terminates the castle), where appeared before me a broad, yet dark stair-

¹ 2. 64.

² *Memoir*, p. 59.

case of oak, and at the foot of it, as if guarding the passage, a large figure in complete armour, the beaver down, and a sword in its hand! The general twilight, with the last western gleam breaking through the painted window at the foot of the staircase, and touching the bronze, gave full effect to this scene, and heightened the obscurity of the stairs, in perspective.

This figure, as she suddenly caught sight of it, probably had a ghostly effect, and might have suggested to her the spectre, dressed in the armor of a knight, which plays such a part in *Gaston de Blondville*. Her interest in Kenilworth led her to study its past history with regrettable industry. *Gaston de Blondville* is the one book in which she made a conscientious attempt to reproduce the life of the past, and the result is a wearisome minuteness of detail.

One attempt to connect her literary work with her travels seems to take no account of times and seasons. Miss Seward, in a letter written February 4, 1796,¹ says:

When speaking of Mrs. Radcliffe's Tour, I forgot to observe the probability that the impressions left on the author's imagination, by the local vestiges at Hardwicke of the unfortunate Mary Stewart;—the bed and chairs, worked by her own fingers;—the little confessional, and prayer-book, all preserved exactly as she left them;—that these objects suggested to Mrs. R. the idea of the marchioness's apartment in the *Mysteries of Udolpho*. I thought that scene much the finest and best imagined part of the novel.

But, as has been said before, Mrs. Radcliffe made her tour of the Lakes in the summer of 1794, and *The Mysteries of Udolpho* had already been published in the spring of 1794. The sight of the relics of Mary Queen of Scots could hardly have suggested the Marchioness' apartment, though the memory of her own imaginative conception might have increased her interest in this other deserted chamber.

¹ *Letters* 4. 151.

Two general sources to which Mrs. Radcliffe is indebted may be mentioned briefly, though it has been my intention to confine the discussion to the more definite sources. One is the German literature which was becoming popular in England about the time she began writing; the other is the Elizabethan.

Mrs. Radcliffe's obligation to *The Ghostseer* has been mentioned. We know that she greatly admired *The Robbers*. Lord Woodhouselee's English translation of the latter appeared in 1792, and she was probably familiar with it before writing *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. Traces of its influence can be found in her hero-villains, such as Montoni and Schedoni, who are in a sense outlaws; in her tendency toward strained and extravagant situations; and in her sentimentality. It must be said, however, that Mrs. Radcliffe never showed the confused sense of moral responsibility which characterized the German school.

The Elizabethan influence is even stronger. Not only do we find in the informal notes of Mrs. Radcliffe's journals references to Shakespeare which show an intimate knowledge of his plays, but in the novels scene after scene is found which is evidently of Shakespearian inspiration. Several situations in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* recall *Macbeth*. Among these are the half-crazed ravings of the dying nun¹; the rising from the table in confusion, when Montoni's story is interrupted by the mysterious voice; and the sounding of the portal-bell as Emily enters the castle. Another strong resemblance to *Macbeth* is found in *The Italian*, when Schedoni and the assassin Spalatro are disputing as to who shall murder Ellena, and the Confessor ends the matter with the words, 'Give me the dagger, then.' The influence of *Hamlet* seems discernible in the whole circumstance of the mysterious figure which is seen on the terrace outside of Emily's window.² The whole of *Gaston de Blondenville*

¹ *Mysteries of Udolpho* 4. 362.

² *Ibid.* 3. 73-4.

is built on the theme of *Hamlet*, and in the Introduction we have a direct reference to it in the remark that Warwick Castle has towers 'that would do honour to Hamlet.'

Without going further into the consideration of parallel situations and parallel themes, one may say that Mrs. Radcliffe's work shows plainly her admiration for Shakespeare and her familiarity with him, and also that in tendency and theme she suggests not only Shakespeare but the later Elizabethans, with their inclination toward the sensational and the gruesome. The fact that, just before Mrs. Radcliffe began writing, there had been a considerable revival of interest in Elizabethan plays, both on the stage and in publication, makes this influence seem a very natural one.¹

Section 3. Translations and Dramatic Versions.

In the account given of Mrs. Radcliffe in the *Biographie Nouvelle des Contemporains* we have this statement:

Les Romans d'Anne Radcliffe ont été traduits dans presque toutes les langues de l'Europe.

A list of French translations follows:

Les Châteaux de Dumblaine et d'Athlin, 1819.

La Forêt. ou l'Abbaye de Saint-Clair, 1798.

Julia, ou les Souterrains du Château de Mazzini, 1801.

Les Mystères d'Udolphe (ce roman, souvent réimprimé, a été traduit en français, 4 vol. in-12, 1794).

¹ Professor Thorndike, in chap. IX of his book on *Tragedy*, gives a list of thirteen old plays revived in the decade 1778-1788. Another play which he does not mention is *Arden of Feversham*, which received its first performance in 1790. Between the years 1708 and 1765, seven editions of Shakespeare's works were published. Editions of Massinger were brought out in 1759, 1761, and 1779. In 1744, Dodsley published twelve volumes of *Old Plays*, and these were reprinted, with some changes, by Isaac Reed in 1780. In 1773 another collection was published by Hawkins. An edition of Beaumont and Fletcher's plays was brought out in 1778. We also find evidence of the printing of individual plays: *The Witch*, by Middleton, was first published in 1778, and *The Atheist's Tragedy* of Tourneur was reprinted in 1792.

Voyage fait dans l'été de 1794 en Hollande et sur la frontière d'Allemagne, avec des observations faites dans une tournée près des lacs de Lancashire, Westmoreland, et Cumberland, 1795. Second edition, 1799. Translated by Cantwel.

L'Italien, ou le Confessional des Pénitens noirs, translated by the Abbé Morellet. Several editions, 1795-1819.

Eléonore de Rosalba, another translation of *The Italian*, by Mary Guy Allard.

The Catalogue of the British Museum has the following list, varying somewhat from the one just given :

Les Châteaux d'Athlin et de Dunbayne. Roman traduit de l'anglais . . . par l'auteur des Mémoires de Cromwell etc. 2 tom. Paris, 1819.

Gaston de Blondeville . . . Roman . . . traduit de l'anglais par le traducteur des romans de Sir W. Scott [A. J. B. Defauconpret]. 3 tom. Paris, 1826.

Les Mystères d'Udolphe . . . Traduit de l'anglais sur la troisième édition, par V. de Chastenay. 6 tom. Paris, 1808.

French imitations of Mrs. Radcliffe's works are also given here :

Barbarinski, ou les Brigands du château de Wissegrade. Imité de l'anglais d'Anne Radcliffe. 2 tom. Paris, 1818, par Madame la Comtesse de Nardouet.

Le Panache rouge, ou le Spectre de Feu, imité de l'anglais d'Anne Radcliff, par Madame la Comtesse de Nardouet. 2 tom. Paris, 1824.

Several Italian versions are also listed, and it is interesting to note that these are all late editions :

Gli Assassini di Ercolano. (Romanzo . . . traduzione del Francese [i. e. a French version of Mrs. Radcliffe's "Romance of the Forest."]). Edizione ricorretta e splendidamente illustrata. Milano, 1871.

I Sotteranei di Mazzini . . . [An Italian Version of the "Sicilian Romance."] Con illustrazioni. Milano, 1883.

Giulia ; o, i Sotteranei del Castello di Mazzini, etc. [A version of "A Sicilian Romance."] Milano, 1889.

The Yale Library possesses a copy of a Spanish version of *A Sicilian Romance*, entitled *Julia o Los Subterraneos del Castillo de Mazzini*.

Novela escrita en ingles par Mad. de Radcliff. Traducida del frances al castellano. Par I. M. P. Valencia, 1819.

Möbius, in his dissertation on *The Gothic Romance*, gives a list of German translations :

Die Nächtliche Erscheinung im Schlosse Mazzini. [*A Sicilian Romance.*] Hannover, 1792. Translated by D. M. Liebeskind.

Adeline oder das Abenteuer im Walde. [*Romance of the Forest.*] Leipzig, Böhme, 1793. D. M. Liebeskind.

Udolphos Geheimnisse. Riga, Hartknoch, 1795. D. M. Liebeskind.

Die Italienerin, oder der Beichtstuhl der Schwarzen Büssenden. Königsberg, Nicolovius, 1797. D. M. Liebeskind.

Ellena, die Italienerin, oder die Warnungen in den Ruinen von Paluzzi, 1801.

The German translators of *The Italian*, it appears, did not realize that Schedoni was meant to be the dominant figure in the book, since in translating they made the word feminine, and so threw the emphasis upon Ellena and her sufferings. The mistake is a fairly good comment, however, on the unsatisfactory nature of the title. There was no particular point in giving to one figure the title of *The Italian*, when all the personages of the story were supposed to be of that nationality.

No doubt many other translations exist which do not appear on any of these lists, but those of which we have record give testimony to the popularity of Mrs. Radcliffe in other countries than her own.

Besides the French romances written in imitation of her, there appears in the British Museum Catalogue one dramatic work.

Le Château des Apennins ou le Fantôme Vivant, drame en cinq actes, en prose. Imité du roman Anglais, les Mystères d'Udolphe [of Anne Radcliffe, by R. C. Guilbert de Pixérécourt.] Paris, 1799.

English dramatists did not neglect the opportunity which Mrs. Radcliffe's works gave for stage-thrills. Her stories

were quite in accord with the theatrical fashions of the day, especially with the German influence, which, beginning with *The Robbers*, culminated in the 'Kotzebue-mania.' They offered sentiment, as well as spectacular scenes, and her use of suspense made her books particularly suitable for dramatization.

A Sicilian Romance was dramatized by Henry Siddons, son of the great actress, and was first performed at Covent Garden, May 28, 1794. The consensus of opinion seems to have been that the play was decidedly inferior to the novel. Genest says of it:

This Op. in 3 short acts was written by Henry Siddons. . . . It is founded on Mrs. Radcliffe's Romance of the same name. . . . The Romance is interesting, . . . but H. Siddons has dramatized it most vilely.¹

Comments upon the play, not particularly enthusiastic, appear in the *European Magazine*² and the *Critical Review*.³

Not much more praise was given to the dramatization of *The Romance of the Forest*, by James Boaden. This play, under the title of *Fontainville Forest*, was first acted at Covent Garden, March 25, 1794. Genest's comment is:

This is a moderate play by Boaden. . . . The plot is professedly borrowed from the Romance of the Forest. . . . The last scene of the 3'd act is rendered contemptible by the introduction of a Phantom.

February ?

A later entry, Jan. 8, 1796, mentions the performance of the play, 'compressed into 4 acts by the author.' Reviews of the play appear in the *European Magazine*,⁴ in the *Critical Review*,⁵ in the *English Review*,⁶ and in the *British Critic*.⁷

¹ *History of the English Stage*. C. G. May 28, 1794.

² 25. 467.

³ N. Ar. 13. 338. March, 1795.

⁴ 25. 308.

⁵ N. Ar. 11. 409.

⁶ 23. 455.

⁷ 4. 186.

We should have expected *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, from its popularity and the dramatic quality of its situations, to receive effective treatment on the stage; but the only play which seems to have any connection with it owed little to the novel, and did not meet with great success. This was *The Mysteries of the Castle*, by Miles Peter Andrews, presented at Covent Garden, January 31, 1795. The *European Magazine*¹ says of it:

In this drama it was expected that 'The Mysteries of Udolpho' would have furnished the principal part of the plot. The name of Montoni only is taken from thence, but the character exhibits few of the daring, bold qualities of that fierce assassin. Although nothing else is taken from Udolpho, Mr. Andrews has availed himself of a striking incident in 'The Sicilian Romance' of the same Author, which forms the tragic part of this absurd mixture of tragedy, comedy, farce, opera, and pantomime.

The *Critical Review*² remarks:

It is one of those pieces which must depend on song and scenery. The story is partly taken from Mrs. Radcliffe's excellent romance; but we fear that lady will not feel herself flattered by the relationship.

Mr. Boaden tried his hand at a dramatization of *The Italian*, in *The Italian Monk*, acted at the Haymarket, August 15, 1797. The reviews of this play are for the most part less favorable than those of *Fontainville Forest*. The comment of Genest upon it is:

This play in 3 acts is Mrs. Radcliffe's interesting Romance badly dramatized by Boaden. . . . It is written partly in blank verse and partly in prose. . . . It would have been better if the whole had been in prose.

A scathing review appeared in *The Monthly Visitor* for August, 1797.³ In this, *The Italian Monk* is considered as a sort of parody on *The Italian*. Mr. Boaden is blamed for

¹ 27. 124.

² N. Ar. 14. 101.

³ 2. 157.

changing the characters, and for introducing needless buffoonery. His only successful passages, according to this writer, are those in which he keeps very close to Mrs. Radcliffe's own words.

Certainly the songs, quoted in some of the reviews, and published separately in the *Lady's Magazine* for September, 1797,¹ are not at all in keeping with the sombre tone of Mrs. Radcliffe's book. One of them is sung by Fioresca, a character created by Mr. Boaden, to make a sweetheart for Paullo, the (supposedly) humorous servant:

Other maidens bait their hooks
 With practis'd glances, tender looks,
 And study tricks from subtle books,
 To hold the lover fast.
 Their golden line of locks so fine
 Before his simple eye they cast,
 With bending bait, and swimming gait,
 To make him sure at last.
 Nonny, nonny, nonnino,
 Nonny, nonny, nonnino,
 Nonny, nonny, nonnino—
 To make him sure at last.

When the village youth would bear
 Me trinkets from the distant fair,
 However they were rich or rare,
 My Paullo pleased me best:
 What though, the work of costly art,
 They call'd for praise in ev'ry part?
 My Paullo with it gave his heart;
 And what was all the rest,
 Nonny, nonny, etc.
 And what was all the rest?

Mr. Boaden also changed the character of Schedoni, and the whole climax of the plot. Instead of having actually murdered his brother, the monk merely thinks he has murdered his wife. In the end he discovers his mistake,

¹ 28. 424.

and is happily reunited to her, instead of dying in agony, as in Mrs. Radcliffe's version.

On the whole, *The Italian Monk* seems to have been quite in the fashion of the day. It was much the sort of thing which Lewis did in *The Castle Spectre*, a hash of melodrama and absurdity, with here and there a touch of flippancy, showing that the author himself did not take it very seriously. It surely is not an adequate dramatization of *The Italian*, a book which contains material for an excellent melodrama, or even, perhaps, if correctly managed, a genuine tragedy.

Mrs. Radcliffe's last romance was dramatized, but apparently never produced. The play *Gaston de Blondville* is published in the *Dramatic Works* of Mary Russell Mitford. In the introduction to the 1854 edition¹ the author makes the statement :

‘Sadak and Kalasrade’ was written to gratify a young musician, and ‘Gaston de Blondville’ because I thought, and still think, that the story, taken from Mrs. Radcliffe's posthumous romance, would be very effective as mere spectacle—a play to look at—upon the stage.

In one of her letters² Miss Mitford wrote :

William Harness has been most unexpectedly struck with ‘Gaston de Blondville.’ . . . The book from which it was taken had no story, so that, except the real ghost, and the first hint of the supernatural pageants, it is really my own. William declares that it made his blood run cold.

Miss Mitford here seems hardly fair to her source. Her list of characters is practically the same as Mrs. Radcliffe's, and the play follows closely the sequence of events in the romance. Hugh Woodreeve, the merchant, accuses the king's favorite of robbery and murder. The merchant is imprisoned in the tower, and preparations go on for the bridal of Gaston, the favorite, with the daughter of the Earl

¹ P. XXXI.

² *Letters and Life* 2. 219.

of Huntington. The bridal is interrupted by the appearance of the ghost. The scene of the banquet, with the supernatural pageants, is the same. The merchant is condemned to be tried for witchcraft. He summons Gaston to the wager of battle. Then comes the principal change in the story. Miss Mitford has introduced a new character, Albert, the page, and there has been hint of a love-affair between him and Gaston's destined bride. When Woodreeve is in need of a champion, Albert appears with a scroll proving that he is the son of Sir Reginald de Tolville, whose ghost has been demanding vengeance. He fights with Gaston, and, being young and inexperienced, is about to be overcome, when the ghost appears. Gaston falls, dropping his sword, and Albert kills him.

It is true that the introduction of Albert supplies more plot-interest. But in view of all that she took from Mrs. Radcliffe, Miss Mitford does not really seem justified in saying that the story was entirely her own. In some respects, however, the play has the advantage of the novel. As some of the critics remarked, the plot of *Gaston de Blondeville* had hardly enough complication and incident to make a complete novel. It does better in the compression of dramatic form. Then, too, of necessity the ghost must make fewer appearances, and this makes him more effective.

On the whole, the dramatizations of Mrs. Radcliffe's stories seem to have had small value of their own. They are chiefly interesting because they furnish some additional testimony to her popularity. It must be said, too, that they emphasize the weaker side of her work, the side which was in harmony with the melodramatic stage-fashions of the day. The faults of the novels become more glaring in the plays. When the drama is in the condition it had reached in the last decade of the eighteenth century, a novel, in taking to the stage, must say goodbye to any artistic unity. Shakespeare's plays, it is true, still held their place, and there had recently been some revival of interest in minor Elizabethans.

But the German influx had begun. Monk Lewis and other translators and adaptors were giving the public a full portion of what it seemed to want—sensation and sentimentality. No wonder that any novel which had a supply of these desirable qualities was eagerly seized upon, and too often used unscrupulously.

A comment quite to the point was made in the *European Magazine* for March, 1799,¹ in an article entitled *Instance of Posthumous Friendship, with a hint to the Dramatizers of Romances.*

It is related of the gypsies, that they commit depredations upon the poultry of those who reside in distant parts of the country, while they carefully abstain from attacks on their immediate neighbors. Such should be the policy of the Romance clippers of the present day. A young gentleman or young lady (probably the latter) sits down to write a romance;—good. The romance happens to have an extensive sale;—good again. A certain dramatic Author, with more cunning than genius, lays his unmerciful hands upon the book, melts it down in his scenic crucible, and vends it as his own. . . .

By such unfair proceedings, the original Author or Authoress is reduced to an unfortunate dilemma;—if the play succeeds, it runs away with all the popularity; if it fails, the failure casts a shade of ridicule and disgrace on the romance. Thus has it fared with many a writer's effusions, and particularly with those natural, moral, and meritorious productions, Caleb Williams, *The Italian*, and *The Monk*; whose fairest flowers are withered by the dulness of *The Iron Chest*, *The Italian Monk*, and *Aurelio and Miranda*.

We may not wholly agree with this writer when he calls a book like Lewis' *Monk* 'natural, moral, and meritorious,' but when he speaks of the 'depredations' of the playwrights, he is probably characterizing pretty aptly a tendency of the time.

¹ 35. 161.

CHAPTER III

CONTRIBUTION TO THE NOVEL

Most critics who have given any attention to Mrs. Radcliffe as a novelist have decided that she is important chiefly for her use of the supernatural, and for her emphasis upon landscape. Although she is, indeed, a pioneer in both these fields, it has seemed to me that, after all, her most important contribution is a matter not of theme, but of structure.

Dibelius attributes Mrs. Radcliffe's methods almost entirely to the influence of Fielding and Richardson, assisted by the French romances.¹ He works out an elaborate parallel between the technique of Fielding and that of the 'new romances' as originated by Walpole and perfected by Mrs. Radcliffe.

Professor Cross, in his *History of Henry Fielding*, speaks of both Richardson and Fielding as adopting a dramatic structure in their stories. 'From the structural point of view,' he says, 'this dramatic manner was the novelty that Richardson at a stroke brought into fiction.'² And in relation to Fielding—'Being a dramatist, Fielding could not conceive of a novel without an elaborate plot. . . . Upon his plot, too, he depended for keeping his readers alert through six volumes.'³

It is true that both Richardson and Fielding departed considerably from the simple picaresque method of Defoe and Smollett. Most of the incidents of their stories had their part in the working out of a definitely conceived plan. But this plan was not, after all, the most important part of the work. Professor Cross suggests a different point of

¹ *Englische Romankunst* 1. 287-8.

² 2. 158.

³ 2. 160.

view when he says, "Tom Jones" . . . was to be the fulfilment of that earlier design of a comic epic such as Homer might have written.¹ And Fielding suggests it himself when, in the first chapter of *Tom Jones*, he says that the provision he has made for his readers is human nature.

Tom Jones develops the picaresque form into an epic, in which the hero and his adventures show us the men and manners of a whole period. Fielding does, it is true, experiment with the dramatic structure, but only as an additional interest, not as an aim in itself. When Dibelius speaks of misleading the reader as part of Fielding's technique,² it seems to me that he stresses the point too much. We never feel convinced that Tom is the son of Jenny Jones; we know that the suggestion is only a cloak to conceal his real parentage. And when Fielding pretends to be afraid that he cannot rescue Tom from his calamities,³ we understand that it is mere pretense, and that within a few chapters a happy marriage is due. The interesting thing is the process by which this end is achieved. Tom's reaction upon his surroundings, and the comprehensive picture of English life which the book gives, hold the reader, in my opinion, more than the working out of the plot. Professor Cross himself admits that Fielding's method is, in general, epic rather than dramatic, when he says, 'Perhaps Fielding did all that could be done in adapting the structure of the *Odyssey* to a novel, but the form at best remains awkward.'⁴

In Richardson's novels, again, we are not so much interested in what is going to happen as in how it happens, and in his case the *how* is a matter of human character. The people who read *Clarissa Harlowe*, and begged the author not to let Clarissa die, did not care whether the ending was a logical development of circumstances; they were

¹ 2. 160.

² 1. 122.

³ *Tom Jones* 3. 247.

⁴ 2. 327.

interested in the ending because they were interested in Clarissa.

In none of these novelists, then, do we find the main interest in plot. Character, manners, adventure in and for itself, not necessarily contributing toward the final climax—these are emphasized in the work of Defoe, Richardson, Fielding, and Smollett.

It is not until we reach Walpole that we have a definite attempt to found the novel upon the technique of the drama. In his preface to the first edition of *The Castle of Otranto*, Walpole says, 'The rules of the drama are almost observed throughout the piece.' In the preface to the second edition he defends his inclusion of comic characters by the example of Shakespeare, who, he says, 'in his deepest tragedies, has introduced the coarse humor of grave-diggers and clumsy jests of the Roman citizens.' This, by the way, seems to oppose Dibelius' theory that the servant as introduced in Mrs. Radcliffe's novels and in *The Castle of Otranto* is imitated from Sancho Panza.¹ Not only was Mrs. Radcliffe, in copying Walpole's talkative servants, carrying on a Shakespearian inspiration, but she may have gone directly to Shakespeare herself for some of her minor characters. Her garrulous old women, like Dorothée and Teresa in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, might easily have been suggested by Juliet's nurse.

Walpole's attempt at dramatic structure was a feeble attempt enough, but it contained the essential elements of the method which Mrs. Radcliffe was to carry to a much higher development. His aim was to excite the curiosity of the reader, and keep him waiting for the final *dénouement*. To a modern reader, however, the whole thing is so absurdly improbable that it excites no curiosity at all, and the climax is a matter of indifference.

Mrs. Radcliffe's method is founded upon the principle

¹ I: 297.

which Walpole tried with imperfect success to embody in his work—the principle of suspense; and it is to this method, probably, that she owed not only her immediate popularity, but much of her importance in literary history. The essentially dramatic quality of her stories is shown by the fact which I have already pointed out, that all but one were dramatized, and most of the resulting plays were successfully performed. It is interesting to notice that her handling of this element of suspense grows more skilful in each successive book, excepting, perhaps, *Gaston de Blondenville*, which was an experiment in a new field. It may be worth while to make a very brief survey of the different plots from this point of view.

In *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne*, Malcolm has slain the Earl of Athlin. The Earl's widow survives him, with two children, Osbert and Mary. Osbert, while wandering about the country, is entertained in a peasant's cottage, and a young peasant, Alleyn, guides him home. A festival is held at the castle, and Alleyn wins first place in the games. As a reward, he is permitted to dance with Mary, and at once falls in love with her. Osbert, wishing to avenge his father, summons the clan for an attack on the Castle of Dunbayne. They succeed in getting inside the castle, but find that Malcolm has been warned by spies, and has armed men ready to seize them. Osbert and Alleyn are both imprisoned, but Alleyn escapes just in time to save Mary, who is being carried off by Malcolm's horsemen. He leads the clan in an attempt to rescue Osbert. Malcolm brings Osbert to the ramparts, and tells the besiegers that the moment of attack is the moment of Osbert's death. The only ransom he will accept is the gift of Mary as his wife. Mary is ready to consent in order to save her brother, although she loves Alleyn. Alleyn finally succeeds in getting one of the soldiers on guard to help Osbert escape. Meanwhile, Osbert has become acquainted with the widow and daughter of Malcolm's brother, who have been defrauded of their

property, and are kept imprisoned in the castle. A relative of theirs, the Count de Santmorin, is received at the Castle of Athlin after Osbert's return, and asks for Mary's hand, but she is unwilling to receive him as a suitor. Malcolm besieges the castle, and is mortally wounded by Osbert. After he has been taken back to his own castle, he confesses to the Baroness that her son did not die, but was entrusted to some peasants. In the meantime, there has been a second attempt to carry off Mary, this time by the Count. She is again rescued by Alleyn, and they go on to the Castle of Dunbayne, where Osbert and Laura, the daughter of the Baroness, were about to be married when Mary's disappearance caused delay. The Baroness immediately recognizes Alleyn as her son by his resemblance to his father, and confirms her recognition by finding the strawberry-mark on his arm. A double wedding is celebrated—Osbert and Laura, Alleyn and Mary.

It will be clear from this brief *résumé* that only rather ordinary means of suspense are employed here, as in the case of Mary's two abductions, with the opportune rescue. The most striking instance is the scene in which Osbert is brought to the ramparts, and his clansmen are warned that if they attack, his life is lost. It is evident, of course, when Alleyn falls in love with Mary, that something must be done to prove him of noble birth, and as soon as we find out that the Baroness has had a son, the ending is clear.

A Sicilian Romance shows a decided advance in plot-making. In fact, it may be said that there is too much plot: the events follow each other with the rapidity of a moving picture. The very first part of the story shows the use of suspense in exciting the reader's curiosity. The Marquis of Mazzini has been married a second time, to a very beautiful and pleasure-loving woman. Madame de Menon, a friend of his first wife, has charge of the education of his two daughters. The southern wing of the castle has been closed for years, but a mysterious light has been seen there,

which has aroused the anxiety of Madame de Menon and the superstition of the servants. One of the servants, Vincent, on his death-bed tries to tell the secret, and does confess to the priest, but dies before he can tell Madame de Menon. Ferdinand, the son of the marquis, comes of age, and there is a great party to celebrate his majority. The marchioness is jealous because Hippolitus, Count de Vereza, whom she admires, prefers Julia. He leaves unexpectedly. Julia and Emilia are obliged to give up their rooms to the marchioness, and are put into rooms adjoining the southern wing. Here they are frightened by strange noises, and tell Ferdinand, who explores the wing, but finds nothing. Hippolitus returns, and declares his love for Julia, but the marquis insists that she shall marry the Duke de Luovo. Ferdinand and Hippolitus plan an elopement, but it is prevented, and Julia is imprisoned. Her maid helps her to escape. The Duke searches for her in vain. Madame de Menon leaves the castle, finds Julia, and takes her to the monastery of St. Augustine, to the protection of the church. From this point, the story is a series of escapes and discoveries. Julia is about to become a nun, to avoid being given back to her father, when Ferdinand comes and tells her that Hippolitus is not dead, as she has heard. They leave the monastery, and reach a ship which is to take them to Italy, but are shipwrecked. They take refuge in a villa. Meanwhile Hippolitus has come in search of Julia, and finds that she has left the monastery. He loses his way, and arrives at a ruin, where he finds a crowd of banditti, with a man who seems to be dying. In fleeing from the banditti, he reaches a chamber where he finds Julia. Some officers come to their aid, but more banditti arrive, and overpower them. Julia and Hippolitus escape. They are pursued by the Duke and his followers; Julia leaves Hippolitus resisting them, and runs into a cavern. She goes through a door and closes it, wanders on until she reaches another door, and unbolts it. Through this she enters a room, and finds a

woman who greets her as a daughter. She has reached the southern wing of the castle, and the secret is revealed. The marquis shut his first wife up here, because he wished to marry another woman, and here he has kept her all these years. Julia remains with her mother, going out into the passage whenever the marquis comes with food. He resolves to kill his wife, because he wants to put the proof of his guilt out of the way. He puts poison in the food he brings to her, but on that very day Hippolitus has traced Julia to her mother's chamber, and they make their escape just after the marquis' visit. The marquis, on returning to his room, feels dizzy and faint, and a servant finds him in agony. Ferdinand runs to the room of his stepmother, and finds her stabbed by her own hand. A letter beside her tells the marquis she has poisoned him. The marquis, before he dies, tells Ferdinand about his mother. Julia and Hippolitus are married, and the family is happily united.

It is easy to see the opportunity for suspense in the various wanderings and reunions. Some good examples are found in Julia's flight. Madame De Menon, when she starts out, does not find Julia in the cottage where she had expected to take refuge, and it seems for a time that the plan has miscarried. Again, Julia thinks she is pursued by the Duke, but finds that her pursuer is a man who is trying to recover his daughter. The same situation occurs when the Duke thinks he has found Julia, and discovers that he has been following the wrong couple. The most striking example of suspense, however, is Vincent's attempt to tell the secret, and his dying before he can reveal it. The reader does not discover the truth until far along in the story, when Julia comes upon her mother in the secret chamber.

The Romance of the Forest has more simplicity of plot, and better treatment of suspense as a means of arousing interest. At the very first our curiosity is excited, when La Motte, inquiring his way at the cottage in the woods, is asked to take away a beautiful and distressed girl. When

they come to the ruined abbey, and decide to stay there, we are constantly kept in suspense as to whether their hiding-place will be discovered. The peculiar behavior of La Motte, when he first sees the Marquis of Montalt, shows that there is some dark secret between them. When Theodore, after rescuing Adeline from the marquis' villa, wounds the marquis and is arrested, we fear evil consequences. Another moment of suspense comes when Adeline has been given once more into the charge of La Motte in the abbey, and the marquis, after seeing a note which Adeline has written to Theodore, orders La Motte to kill her. Again, Theodore is about to be executed when Louis La Motte hears of accusations which have been made against the marquis, and has the execution delayed. It develops that Adeline is the daughter of the marquis' brother, whom he has murdered in order to get the property. He discovered her identity by her mother's seal on the letter she had written, and had intended to have her put out of the way also. A characteristic use of suspense in this story is found where Adeline is obliged to stop reading at an exciting point in the manuscript, because her light goes out. Another time of anxiety is at the apparent discovery of La Motte's hiding-place, when the intruder turns out to be his own son.

The Mysteries of Udolpho is full of complications and unexpected turns, but the main story can be told in few words. Emily St. Aubert and her father, after Madame St. Aubert's death, set out on a journey. They meet Valancourt, who falls in love with Emily. During the journey St. Aubert dies, leaving Emily to the care of her aunt. This aunt, after some encouragement of Valancourt, forbids the marriage, and herself marries Montoni, an Italian. They take Emily to Venice, and afterward to Montoni's castle, Udolpho, in the Apennines. The rest of the story narrates Emily's adventures in the castle, her escape, her reception in the Château de Villefort, and her final union with Valancourt. It would be superfluous to mention all

the places in this story where Mrs. Radcliffe makes use of suspense. Before they leave home, Emily sees her father looking intently at a miniature which she knows is not a picture of her mother. When he is dying, he asks her to burn certain papers without looking at them. In burning them, she notices involuntarily two lines of writing which make a terrible impression upon her. She is tempted to read on, but obeys her father's request. Her curiosity remains unsatisfied, and the reader's is still more so, for he has not even seen the two lines. The most famous incident in the story is that of the black veil. Emily has been told of a mysterious picture, concealed behind a black curtain. Coming upon it by accident, she is urged by curiosity to lift the curtain. She falls senseless to the floor, and it is not until the end of the book that we find out what she has seen. Another scene almost as hair-raising is the visit of Emily and Dorothee to the room of the dead marchioness, when the black pall on the bed begins slowly to rise, and Emily is sure that she sees peering from beneath it a human face. The disappearance of Ludovico from this same room is another good example of suspense; it is not until after many pages that we get the explanation—a band of smugglers has been using that wing of the chateau as a hiding-place for stolen goods, and they have carried off Ludovico to encourage the belief that the rooms are haunted. The whole book is a study in suspense; we are interested not so much in the adventures themselves as in the outcome of the adventures, the explanation of the mysteries.

The Italian has perhaps the most dramatic plot of all. In its essential theme it is rather hackneyed, for it is the old story of true love which does not run smooth. Vincentio di Vivaldi has seen Ellena Rosalba at church, and has fallen in love with her. He forms an acquaintance with her and her aunt, and visits them at their villa. His father and mother, however, object to the connection. The monk, Schedoni, conspires with Vivaldi's mother, the Marchesa,

to get Ellena out of the way. She is first taken to a convent, but Vivaldi finds her, and effects her escape. They are about to be married, when they are arrested in the name of the Inquisition. Vivaldi is imprisoned at Rome; Ellena is taken to a lonely house on the sea-shore, where occurs the scene mentioned before—that in which Schedoni, about to kill her, recognizes his own picture about her neck, and thinks that she is his daughter. At the end of the book, Schedoni poisons both himself and the monk who has betrayed him. Ellena finds her mother in the nun who has befriended her; she learns that she is the niece, not the daughter, of Schedoni; and she and Vivaldi are happily married.

Suspense is a powerful element in the story. Vivaldi, in his visits to Ellena's villa, meets by the ruined fort a mysterious monk who warns him not to go on. The appearances and disappearances of this monk excite our curiosity, especially when Vivaldi follows him into the ruin, and we are not told what he has found. When Vivaldi and Paulo visit the place together, Vivaldi tells Paulo to pause and consider whether he can depend upon his courage, for it may be severely tried. This, again, arouses wonder as to what Vivaldi has discovered. The whole incident of Vivaldi's visit to the convent in disguise and his rescue of Ellena keeps us constantly in suspense as to the outcome. In the house of the assassin, Ellena's fate trembles in the balance. In the Inquisition-scenes our attention is held by the mysterious voice which speaks to Vivaldi in his cell, and which afterwards accuses Schedoni; we can easily believe that 'the silence of expectation rapt the court.'

One way in which Mrs. Radcliffe reinforces this element of suspense is by the use of music for dramatic effect. She was, as we have seen, very fond of music, and in all her stories she introduces it freely. Her heroines, in gazing at a beautiful landscape, are almost as sure to hear sweet music as they are to compose poetry. But it is not used merely

to enforce description; it has often a more distinct aim. A striking example is the scene in *The Italian*, where Schedoni and the Marchesa are planning Ellena's death:

'Aye,' muttered the Confessor, still musing,—'in a chamber of that house there is——'

'What noise is that?' said the Marchesa, interrupting him. They listened. A few low and querulous notes of the organ sounded at a distance, and stopped again.

'What mournful music is that?' enquired the Marchesa in a tremulous voice. 'It was touched by a fearful hand! Vespers were over long ago!'

'Daughter,' observed Schedoni, somewhat sternly, 'you said you had a man's courage. Alas! you have a woman's heart.'

'Excuse me, father; I know not why I feel this agitation, but I will command it. That chamber?' . . .

'A passage leads to the sea,' continued Schedoni. . . . 'There, on the shore, when darkness covers it; there, plunged amidst the waves, no stain shall hint of'——

'Hark!' interrupted the Marchesa, starting, 'that note again!'

The organ sounded faintly from the choir, and paused, as before. In the next moment, a slow chanting of voices was heard, mingling with the rising peal, in a strain particularly melancholy and solemn.

'Who is dead?' said the Marchesa, changing countenance; 'it is a requiem!'

Here the music has a direct dramatic relation to the action, in its working upon a guilty soul.

Similar examples, where music plays a part in the course of the narrative, are found in the earlier novels. In *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne*, Osbert is confined in the castle of his enemy when 'the soft notes of a lute surprised his attention.' Through this he is led to discover the presence in the castle of the two ladies, one of whom immediately inspires his love.

In *The Romance of the Forest*, Adeline is recalled from melancholy and despair to hopefulness by strains of music which, by changing her mood, seem to hint at the happy outcome of her troubles. *The Mysteries of Udolpho* makes

constant use of music to help in maintaining suspense. Perhaps the most dramatic instance is the scene in which Emily and the old servant, Dorothée, visit the chamber of the dead marchioness :

‘I will only tell what happened. My lord, the Marquis——’

‘Hush, Dorothée, what sounds were those?’ said Emily.

Dorothée changed countenance, and, while they both listened, they heard, on the stillness of the night, music of uncommon sweetness.

Dibelius speaks of the tendency to emphasize individual scenes as a characteristic which distinguishes Mrs. Radcliffe’s method from that of Fielding and Smollett. This, it seems to me, is proof that her style is more distinctly dramatic. In thinking of one of Mrs. Radcliffe’s stories, as in thinking of a play, one is inclined to remember striking scenes rather than a continuous narrative. Especially is this true in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and *The Italian*. Certain definite pictures stand out—Madame Montoni’s burial; the duel of Montoni and the Count; the visit of Emily and Dorothée to the marchioness’ apartment; the scene in the bandits’ cave; Ellena, aroused from sleep in her gloomy chamber to find Schedoni bending over her; Ellena and Vivaldi standing before the priest ready for the marriage ceremony, rudely interrupted by the band of ruffians.

In this matter of structure, one can hardly deny that Mrs. Radcliffe made a contribution which was distinctive and important. Her deliberate use of suspense as an artistic principle is something entirely different from the method of Richardson and Fielding in shaping the incidents of their stories to fit into a general plan. Just how far her method affected later writers is a question which it would be difficult to answer conclusively. Scott had a strong feeling for the individual scene, and we know that in many ways he was influenced by Mrs. Radcliffe’s work. The great novels of the nineteenth century show a combination of the picar-

esque and the dramatic methods, with the emphasis, probably, upon the latter. The short stories, from Poe down to the latest attempts in our magazines, are founded upon the principle of suspense;⁵ and the modern detective story, with its elaborate mystification, and its often disappointing solution, no doubt owes much to Mrs. Radcliffe's methods. She gave a new emphasis to action—not action in and for itself, as in the picaresque novel, but action as bringing about complications, and resolving them.

It seems hardly fair, then, to think of the 'Gothic' novel as a mere side-issue in the development of the type—a 'blind alley' leading nowhere. Walpole, with his clumsy beginnings, and Mrs. Radcliffe, with the perfected method, added something to the plot as Richardson and Fielding had conceived it, and so had their direct share in the development of the novel.

Mrs. Radcliffe's influence upon the subject-matter of the novel has received more general attention than her influence upon its structure. Without going into detail upon this question, we may briefly recall the general character of her contribution. Scott says of her that she appeals 'to those powerful and general sources of interest, a latent sense of supernatural awe, and curiosity concerning whatever is hidden and mysterious.'

In this appeal Scott himself followed her. Certain of his novels, like *Woodstock* and *Anne of Geierstein*, remind us of Mrs. Radcliffe not only in subject-matter, but in treatment. 'Gothic' themes persisted in the literature of the first half of the nineteenth century. Mrs. Shelley, in *Frankenstein*, produced a tale of terror which carried the supernatural into the pseudo-scientific. Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* makes striking use of physical immortality as a means of spiritual torture. For stories of mystery we have Bulwer's *Zanoni* and Godwin's *St. Leon*. Crime becomes an important element in novels like Bulwer's *Eugene Aram*, Godwin's *Caleb Williams*, and Ainsworth's *Rook-*

wood and Jack Sheppard. This tendency to picture the life and character of criminals is shown later in Dickens, and in the vivid representation of outlaw-life which we find in *Lorna Doone*. And the climax of Gothicism, with its appeal to the 'sense of supernatural awe and curiosity concerning whatever is hidden and mysterious,' came in the middle of the century with Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*.

In America the influence is quite as striking. Charles Brockden Brown shows perhaps most directly and unmistakably the resemblance to Mrs. Radcliffe. Hawthorne and Poe are to a considerable extent 'Gothic' in their treatment of the supernatural and the mysterious. Poe also resembles Mrs. Radcliffe in the fact that his chief aim seems to be to produce in his reader a certain emotional effect, and in his method of exciting interest by suspense.

We may say, then, that Mrs. Radcliffe's contribution to the nineteenth-century novel was not only a matter of structure, but a certain more indefinite spirit—the spirit of curiosity and awe before the mystery of things. As in structure her method of dramatic suspense was combined with the picaresque type which had preceded it, so in theme this new romantic spirit blended with the other spirit of realism and satire that the earlier and greater novelists had introduced. Dickens is following, part of the time, in the footsteps of realists like Fielding and Smollett. But when, in *Great Expectations*, we see Miss Havisham by her dusty dressing-table, on which lies the satin slipper turned yellow with age, or gaze at the banqueting-table with the wedding-cake mouldering in the centre, we might be in the dread chamber of the château where Emily and Dorothee found the clothes of the marchioness lying just as she had thrown them off, 'and, on the dressing-table, a pair of gloves and a long black veil, which, as Emily took it up to examine, she perceived was dropping to pieces with age.' In the first part of *Jane Eyre*, Charlotte Brontë gives a vivid and apparently realistic picture of a child's suffering. But in her portrayal of Rochester she seems to be returning, in some

degree, to Mrs. Radcliffe's conception of the 'villain-hero.' Still more is this true of Emily Brontë, in her amazing and terrific picture of Heathcliff.

Many people have considered that Mrs. Radcliffe's most valuable contribution to the novel was her use of natural scenery. Miss Reynolds has shown that eighteenth-century novelists in general had little interest in the surroundings of their heroes. Except in the novels of Charlotte Smith, there had been little use of landscape in fiction until, as Miss Reynolds says, 'In these novels by Mrs. Radcliffe the romantic landscape was presented in its complete form.'¹

It is unnecessary to go into any discussion of the importance of scenery in the later novels. We may present it as our general conclusion that Mrs. Radcliffe modified to some degree both the structure and the theme of the novel. In structure she developed the principle of suspense, adapting to fiction more completely than had been done before the technique of the drama. In the matter of theme her contribution was twofold, dealing both with the supernatural and with the natural—that is, with natural scenery.

One must of course realize that in none of these fields did Mrs. Radcliffe take the very first step. Walpole, as I have said before, made some use of dramatic climax and suspense, although it was pretty feeble. Thomas Leland, in his *Longsword*, published in 1762, has the earl kept in ignorance of the fate of his household, but the interruption to his inquiries is not very reasonable:

Now, when restored to a degree of tranquillity, he again offered at some inquiries on his part, of his house, his son and wife, but was instantly interrupted by Randolph, who reminded him of rest.²

The supernatural—or rather, the apparently supernatural, with a natural ending, quite in the style of Mrs. Radcliffe—is found in Smollett's *Ferdinand, Count Fathom*, where Melvil, going to mourn in the church where he supposes his

¹ *The Treatment of Nature in English Poetry*, p. 219.

² *Longsword* I. 131.

love to be buried, sees what he thinks to be her spectre, but discovers that it is the living woman. The treatment here is much more suggestive of Mrs. Radcliffe's method than the clumsy magic of Walpole's tale. Charlotte Smith had made some use of landscape, and others, as Miss Reynolds points out, had introduced little touches of description. Smollett has one passage which Miss Reynolds does not mention, where Ferdinand

Found himself benighted in the midst of a forest, far from the habitations of men. The darkness of the night, the silence and solitude of the place, the indistinct images of the trees that appeared on every side, 'stretching their extravagant arms athwart the gloom,' conspired with the dejection of spirits occasioned by his loss, to disturb his fancy, and raise strange phantoms in his imagination.¹

This is quite in the tone of 'Gothic' description, especially when we realize that it leads up to a scene of robbery.

But, after all, a first step is not necessarily a decisive step. These tentative beginnings might lead to nothing if Mrs. Radcliffe had not assembled the scattered hints, and shaped them into a distinctly characteristic method, into a type of novel strong enough to win popularity. Smollett's suggestion of 'Gothicism,' Walpole's patchwork of ghosts and giants, even the attempt at historical romance in *Longsword*, might have had little effect upon the development of the novel, if 'Gothic' themes had not been triumphantly established in *The Romance of the Forest* and *The Mysteries of Udolpho*.

Mrs. Radcliffe did, then, make a definite and important contribution to the novel. One question, however, remains. If she did make such a decided change in structure, such a considerable addition in theme, how does it happen that her contribution was not in itself more permanent? Why are her books relegated to the darkest and dustiest corner of the library shelves—if, indeed, the modern library owns them at all?

¹ *Ferdinand, Count Fathom*, p. 145.

The answer lies in one undeniable weakness—her failure to individualize her characters. It has been said that we are interested in the places which Scott describes because we always associate them with the people that he has created. Quite the opposite is true of Mrs. Radcliffe. We are interested in her people, for the most part, only because of the situation or the place in which they happen to find themselves.

This lack of characterization leads, naturally, to a loss of interest after one reading. At first, as Talfourd says, we put ourselves into the place of the hero or heroine, and follow the adventures with an almost personal interest. But when once the outcome is known, there is no incentive to rereading; there are no characters which fascinate us by their humanness, so that we wish to associate with them over and over again.

Then, too, lack of character-drawing leads to lack of motivation. When the people have no individuality, there is no reason why they should do one thing more than another. Therefore situation is emphasized in and for itself; there is usually no logical relation of action to character. It is this condition that, in a play, gives melodrama; and, indeed, Mrs. Radcliffe's novels have to those of George Eliot or of Scott at his best a relation not unlike that of melodrama to genuine tragedy or tragi-comedy.

Different conditions confront us, however, when we measure her by the novelists who were her immediate contemporaries. Novels were being turned out in ever increasing numbers, but only a few of the writers received anything like the recognition which was accorded Mrs. Radcliffe. Those most prominently mentioned in the reviews of the time are Matthew Gregory Lewis, Mrs. Inchbald, and Charlotte Smith.

Lewis has already been spoken of. There is no doubt that he received much of his inspiration from Mrs. Radcliffe's *Mysteries of Udolpho*, although, as has been said before, he may in turn have given her some suggestions for

The Italian. In his psychological treatment of character he has probably surpassed her; some real power of analysis is shown in the monk's struggle between religion and passion. But the crudity of his horrors make his book absurd; it survives, so far as it survives at all, as a literary curiosity. Byron wrote of it:¹ 'These descriptions ought to have been written by Tiberius at Caprea—they are forced—the *philtered* ideas of a jaded voluptuary. It is to me inconceivable how they could have been composed by a man of only twenty.' The cynicism of the book, and its open disregard of conventional morality, called forth reviews which were distinctly unfavorable. Although Lewis was for a time much talked of, he was a man of one book, and his influence was not equal to that of Mrs. Radcliffe.

One of the reviews of *The Mysteries of Udolpho* closes with these words: 'This is the best composition of this kind that has appeared since Mrs. Inchbald's *Simple Story*.'² The expression, 'this kind,' is a little puzzling here. The reviewer must surely be thinking of fiction in general, for, except that they are both fiction, two compositions could hardly be more unlike than *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and *A Simple Story*.

Mrs. Inchbald's book was very popular, and it is not hard to understand why it should have been so. Its chief recommendation is that it really is 'A Simple Story'; the language is unaffected, and the situations and emotions are of the sort that have a general appeal. But in structure it is faulty; the break of seventeen years in the middle of the story is awkward, especially so because after the seventeen years we have to readjust completely our ideas of the principal characters. Moreover, the ethical purpose of the book is rather too obvious for successful art. Mrs. Radcliffe, it is true, was strictly moral; her stories may all be said to be elaborations of the theme, 'those that were good shall be happy'; but her main interest does not lie there. Mrs.

¹ Journal, Dec. 6, 1813.

² *English Review* 23. 464.

Inchbald is a follower of Rousseau, in that her book is to some extent an educational treatise in disguise.

Mrs. Smith may more justly be considered a rival of Mrs. Radcliffe, for we find in her work two of Mrs. Radcliffe's most notable characteristics—the so-called 'Gothic' element, and the interest in natural scenery. These characteristics are most prominent, however, in *The Old Manor House*, which was published in 1793, after *A Sicilian Romance* and *The Romance of the Forest*. So it is quite possible that Mrs. Smith deliberately imitated the methods which were bringing her sister-novelist success.

She evidently had a genuine love of nature, and some of her English landscapes are very well done. Miss Mitford referred to her as a 'landscape poet.'¹ But when she attempted foreign scenes, the result was less satisfactory. I have spoken of Mrs. Radcliffe's habit of steadying her imagination by reference to books of travel, as for instance in her adaptation of Mrs. Piozzi's descriptions of Venice. If Mrs. Smith consulted any books of travel, either she was unfortunate in her source, or she made no geographical distinction between North and South America. Her description of early spring in a Canadian wilderness is startling:

On the opposite side of the river lay an extensive savannah, alive with cattle, and coloured with such a variety of swamp plants, that their colour, even at that distance, detracted something from the vivid green of the new-sprung grass. . . . The acclivity on which the tents stood sinking very suddenly on the left, the high cliffs there gave place to a cypress swamp, . . . while on the right the rocks, rising suddenly and sharply, were clothed with wood of various species; the evergreen oak, the scarlet oak, the tulip tree and magnolia, seemed bound together by festoons of flowers, some resembling the convolvuluses of our gardens, and others the various sorts of clematis, with vigenias, and the Virginia creeper. . . . Beneath these fragrant wreaths that wound about the trees, tufts of rhododendrons, and azalea, of andromedas and calmias, grew in the most luxuriant beauty; and strawberries already ripening, or

¹ *Letters* 2. 29.

even ripe, peeped forth among the rich vegetation of grass and flowers.¹

And this spring is supposed to follow 'only a few days after the severest weather, which had buried the whole country in snow.'

But Mrs. Smith, though inferior to Mrs. Radcliffe in description and plot, has surpassed her in one direction. She has created one triumphantly successful character. Mrs. Rayland, in *The Old Manor House*, never announcing her intention of making young Orlando her heir, yet governing his destiny by her slightest nod, and maintaining his whole family in awe, is a masterpiece. If Charlotte Smith had developed more fully the power of character-drawing which she showed in this one figure, she would occupy a very different place in the line of novelists from her present obscure niche. But she wrote, for the most part, hurriedly, and under pressure of financial need. Mrs. Carter, writing of one of the earlier books to Mrs. Montagu, says:

I was glad to find that you were pleased with the 'Orphan of the Castle.' I heartily wish it was fashionable enough to be of any essential benefit to the author, who has been obliged to purchase her freedom from a vile husband, by giving up part of the little fortune she had left; so that she has at present little more than a hundred a year to support herself and six or seven children.²

This personal note was rather common in the consideration of books by feminine authors. Several reviews, not very favorable in tone, of books by women, add as an extenuating circumstance that the writer has a worthy object, the support of children, parents, or a husband, as the case may be. The difference in attitude in the reviews of Mrs. Radcliffe's work is very noticeable. There is never any mention of her personal circumstances; the books are considered wholly upon their merits, and, in the case of the earlier ones, the reviewer is evidently uncertain whether to

¹ *The Old Manor House* 3. 349.

² *Letters*, June 30, 1788.

attribute them to a man or a woman. That Mrs. Radcliffe stood apart from the general crowd of feminine writers who were taking possession of the field of fiction, is evident from a comment in *The Pursuits of Literature*, by T. Mathias, a production which is rather severe upon writers in general and novelists in particular :

Mrs. Charlotte Smith, Mrs. Inchbald, Mrs. Mary Robinson, Mrs. etc. etc. though all of them are ingenious ladies, yet they are too frequently *whining* or *frisking* in novels, till our girls' heads turn wild with impossible adventures, and now and then are tainted with democracy. . . . Not so the mighty magician of *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, bred and nourished by the Florentine Muses in their sacred solitary caverns amid the paler shrines of Gothic superstition, and in all the dreariness of enchantment: a poetess whom Ariosto would with rapture have acknowledged, as the

La nudrita

Damigella Trivulzia al sacro speco. (O. F. c. 46)¹

In summing up the impressions gained from this study, one is inclined to try to relate literature to life, and to conclude that the chief defect in Mrs. Radcliffe's art was a natural result of her temperament. Her journals are filled with descriptions of scenery; there are few comments upon people. She has left no evidence of any strong personal friendships outside of her own family. It is natural to conclude that she was not keenly interested in the men and women around her, that she had not a quick eye for the little oddities of human character. The fairies gave her many gifts, but they held back the one which a novelist most needs. With the possible exception of Schedoni, she has not left us a single figure which deserves a place in the portrait-gallery of fiction. But the gifts were not wasted. They made her immensely popular at a time when the novel had, perhaps, advanced about as far as it could along one line and was ready for a change. They made it possible for her to influence men and women who possessed the one precious gift which she lacked, and, by her influence upon them, to affect the whole development of the novel.

¹ *Pursuits of Literature*, p. 20.

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